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November 2, 2023

The Honorable Michael S. Regan
Administrator, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20460

Administrator Regan,

I write to express concern about the potential consequences of the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) recent determination regarding emissions of lead from aircraft that operate on leaded fuel. Specifically, I am concerned about the adverse implications for the ability of the general aviation (GA) community to continue flying, aviation safety, and pilot training as a result of the required rulemaking process from this finding—which will result in the eventual elimination of lead from aviation gasoline (avgas).

General aviation is deeply ingrained to the history and culture of south central Kansas. In fact, Wichita, Kansas, is the Air Capital of the World. As such, I am concerned about how the process set in motion by this determination may affect the vibrant GA community in south central Kansas.

The EPA's October 18 determination assesses that "lead emissions from aircraft engines that operate on leaded fuel cause or contribute to air pollution which may reasonably be anticipated to endanger public health and welfare under section 231(a) of the Clean Air Act." As required under law by the Clean Air Act, issuing this finding triggers a requirement for the EPA and FAA to promulgate rules and regulations for lead emissions standards from certain aircraft engines.

Avgas is an essential fuel for piston-engine aircraft. Pursuing a premature prohibition or removal of an essential fuel from the marketplace without viable, widely available, and affordable alternatives would have far-reaching effects on the aviation ecosystem, including impacts to GA pilots' ability to fly, aviation safety, airspace efficiency, and more.

Efforts to offer alternatives to and eventually eliminate leaded avgas should be driven by safety for GA pilots and airspace, emphasize market forces, ensure the continuous availability of avgas for pilots without disruption, protect the GA community's ability to fly, and support the ability for the next generation of pilots to train without interference or safety risk. Moreover, at a time when the aviation industry is already facing significant challenges with the pilot workforce—which is expected to intensify in the coming years—we cannot afford to prematurely eliminate the indispensable fuel the GA community utilizes to fly certain aircraft.

I appreciate your attention to this critical issue.

Sincerely,

Ron Estes

Kansas 4th District