

**May 7, 2009**

## **Governor Perdue Signs Aviation Authority Legislation**

WAYCROSS—Governor Sonny Perdue today signed Senate Bill 85, creating the Georgia Aviation Authority that will govern the state's aircraft management. SB 85 was introduced by Administration Floor Leader Sen. Bill Heath and carried in the House by Administration Floor Leader Rep. Jimmy Pruet. Senators Ronnie Chance, Chip Pearson, Jim Butterworth, Bill Cowsert and Ross Tolleson also worked in the Senate for passage of the legislation, along with Representatives Jim Cole, Matt Ramsey, Rich Golick and Barry Loudermilk in the House.

“The Georgia Aviation Authority will consolidate our aircraft management resulting in greater coordination and mission efficiency,” said Governor Perdue. “It will ensure the best return on Georgia taxpayers' investment in aviation assets.”

Governor Perdue signed the legislation at the Waycross-Ware County Airport where the 2007 wildfires burned more than 882 square miles of woodland in Georgia and North Florida. The response to the wildfires required close coordination of the state's aircraft fleet, and the Georgia Aviation Authority will ensure that coordination occurs at all times, not just during emergencies.

The legislation is a result of recommendations from the Commission for a New Georgia task force on aviation management. The task force found that five different state agencies own a combined total of 85 aircraft, which are based in 18 locations around the state. More than half of the aircraft are over 20 years old and represent 13 different types with vintages dating to the Vietnam era.

The aviation authority will deploy these assets more efficiently by using the aircraft to meet the missions of multiple agencies rather than one agency. This will enable the state to cover existing missions with fewer aircraft. The authority will also standardize the type of aircraft the state owns, allowing the state to standardize maintenance and training which will reduce costs and increase safety.

The authority will also allow the state to modernize its fleet and eliminate the higher costs of maintaining old aircraft. By establishing a unified team of aviation professionals, the authority will ensure safe, effective and efficient operations.

“The Aviation Authority applies a business model to the state's aviation management,” said Sen. Bill Heath. “Doing so will enhance safety, make state government more efficient and save the citizens of Georgia money.”

The authority will be composed of nine members: the Governor, Lieutenant Governor and Speaker of the House (or their designee); the Department of Transportation Commissioner; the Department of Public Safety Commissioner; the Department of Natural Resources Commissioner; and the Director of the State Forestry Commission; and the two remaining members will represent the aviation business community and will be appointed by the Lieutenant Governor and the Speaker of the House.

“The new Authority will result in better and more efficient service for Georgians by allowing for the cross-training of pilots and the consolidation of aircraft,” said Rep. Jimmy Pruet.