

2017 NATA Aviation Business Roundtable Speakers



Marty Hiller, President | National Air Transportation Association

Marty Hiller is the current Chief Executive Officer of Hiller Carbon, a leading supplier of carbon to steel mills and foundries and was named President of the National Air Transportation Association (NATA) in August 2016. NATA represents aeronautical service providers at over 2,300 locations in the U.S. and beyond. NATA's members own, operate and service general aviation, commercial and military aircraft. Hiller leads a highly skilled group of professionals that provide advocacy on legislative and regulatory issues before federal, state and local governments. NATA also provides an array of member services including the highly renowned Safety 1st Program, viewed as the "Gold Standard" for training professional line service personnel and other staff.

Entrepreneur Marty Hiller is a principal in North Shore Holdings, LLC, with interests in aviation, carbon, and minerals. Primary aviation activities include the ownership of fixed-base operations, including Marathon Jet Center, Marathon General Aviation, Marathon Florida, Harbour Air Services, Traverse City, Michigan. Hiller Carbon, a North Shore Holdings subsidiary, provides carbon and specialty minerals to steel, rubber, and plastics industries. He is most known in aviation for the ownership of The Hiller Group, a leading supplier of branded fuel to over 600 airports in North America. The Hiller Group, Inc. was acquired by World Fuel Services [NYSE:int] in December 2010. [Click here for full bio.](#)



Michael P. Huerta, Administrator | Federal Aviation Administration

Michael P. Huerta is the Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration. He was sworn in to office on January 7, 2013, for a five-year term and is responsible for the safety and efficiency of the largest aerospace system in the world. He oversees a \$16.3 billion dollar budget and more than 47,000 employees.

During his tenure, Huerta has worked to redefine the FAA's regulatory relationship with the aviation industry to achieve greater levels of safety through increased collaboration and widespread sharing of data. He also has led the agency's efforts to modernize the nation's air traffic control system through the NextGen program while preparing the way for the safe integration of commercial space operations and small unmanned aircraft systems (UAS). Since the beginning of Huerta's term, the FAA has completed key building blocks of NextGen, including the installation of modern information systems to serve as the backbone for future technological improvements. The FAA also completed the installation of a comprehensive network of ground-based radio stations that enable the use of Global Positioning Satellites (GPS) instead of radar to better manage air traffic. In addition, the agency has made significant progress in harnessing GPS technology to modernize thousands of air traffic routes in congested airspace. [Click here for full bio.](#)

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Ali Bahrami, Associate Administrator for Aviation Safety | Federal Aviation Administration

Long-time aviation executive Ali Bahrami became the FAA's Associate Administrator for Aviation Safety on July 10, 2017. Previously, he was Vice President for Civil Aviation at Aerospace Industries Association, a Washington, D.C.-based trade association that represents the nation's leading aerospace and defense manufacturers and suppliers. As Associate Administrator, Bahrami leads the organization responsible for setting safety standards and overseeing all parts of the aviation industry — airlines, manufacturers, repair stations, pilots, mechanics, air traffic controllers, flight attendants, and any person or product that operates in aviation. These programs have a direct impact on every facet of domestic and international civil aviation safety. The Aviation Safety Organization's programs are carried out by 7,400 employees located in Washington headquarters, regional and directorate offices, and 125 field offices throughout the world. The organization's annual budget is more than \$1.4 billion.

Bahrami first joined the FAA as an engineer in 1989, and from 2004-2013 served as manager of the Transport Airplane Directorate. In that capacity, he was involved in decision making regarding appropriate safety actions for the existing fleet and the development of recommendations aimed at improving the design standards for the future aircraft models. He directed the U.S. validation of the Airbus 380 through successful collaboration with the manufacturer and the European Aviation Safety Agency. He also directed the FAA certification of the Boeing 787 and the 747-8 passenger and freighter models. He holds B.S. and M.S. degrees in engineering from the University of Michigan. [Click here for full bio.](#)



William R. Deere, EVP of Government & External Affairs | National Air Transportation Association

Bill Deere joined NATA in April of 2014 and leads the association's policy, advocacy, and communications efforts. No stranger to aviation, Bill twice served as a professional staff member at the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA), rising to the position of Senior Vice President for Legislative Affairs. Bill was AOPA's principal representative to Capitol Hill and managed its Washington, DC, office. In between stints at AOPA, Deere served on the House Appropriations Committee staff for Rep. Jim Lightfoot (IA). Representative Lightfoot, a pilot, was a leading member of the Transportation Appropriations Subcommittee and was deeply involved in the development of FAA reform legislation designed to improve the agency's personnel and procurement processes. [Read more.](#)



The Honorable Rick Larsen (D-WA)

Ranking Member, Aviation Subcommittee

House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee

The Honorable Rick Larsen serves on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and the House Armed Services Committee. These committees enable him to focus on creating jobs and opportunity to meet the local needs of Northwest Washington. As a member of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, Representative Larsen is committed to investing in transportation to drive job growth and keep the economy moving. He will continue to fight for strong investments in roads, bridges, highways and transit to build a foundation for future economic growth. Rail safety is another priority issue, and he has worked hard to push for better safety standards for crude oil traveling by rail.

Congressman Larsen is the Ranking Member, the most senior Democratic member, of the Aviation Subcommittee. The work of the Subcommittee is critical to jobs and the economy in Washington state and the Second District. He says, "The Pacific Northwest is the aerospace capital of the world, and I will work hard to make sure the United States invests in our aviation future. Aviation means jobs in Northwest Washington. Anything I can do to support the growth and safety of air travel will bring good jobs to our communities."

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The Honorable Steve Russell (R-OK)

Member, House Armed Services Committee

A native Oklahoman, The Honorable Steve Russell earned a degree in public speaking from Ouachita Baptist University and completed the Army ROTC program. Congressman Russell was then commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant-Army Infantry, which began his 21-year career in the U. S. Army. He completed the rigorous U.S. Army Ranger School in Class 11-87, and he deployed to assignments in the Arctic, the desert, the Pacific, Europe and Continental U. S. stations. Operationally, he was deployed to Kosovo, Kuwait, Afghanistan, and Iraq. During Operation Iraqi Freedom, Representative Russell commanded the 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry and conducted combat in Tikrit, Iraq. His unit

played a key role in the capture of Saddam Hussein, which is documented in his book, *We Got Him! A Memoir of the Hunt and Capture of Saddam Hussein*.

Congressman Russell completed a master's degree in history from the Command and General Staff College. Before retiring as a Lieutenant Colonel, he earned the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star with Valor Device, and Oak Leaf Cluster. As a member of the Oklahoma State Senate from 2008-2012, he led efforts to protect the unborn, combat human trafficking, support veterans benefits, and reform the adoption process. Representative Russell was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 2014. His committee assignments include: House Republican Steering Committee; House Committee on Government Oversight and Reform (Vice Chair of the Subcommittee on National Security) and House Armed Services Committee.



Ken Mead, General Counsel | Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association

Ken Mead comes to AOPA from Baker Botts, LLP, where he served as Special Counsel, focusing on transportation, aviation, governmental affairs, and regulatory matters, since 2006. Before that, he served for nine years as Inspector General to the U.S. Department of Transportation under both the Clinton and Bush administrations and was recognized for his exemplary service with a Senate resolution.

Prior to taking on the role of Inspector General, Ken spent 20 years at the U.S. Government Accountability Office in a variety of roles, including Deputy Assistant Comptroller General and Director for Transportation Issues and Policy. He is also a veteran of U.S. Navy Submarine Service. He earned his J.D. from the University of South Carolina School of Law and is admitted to practice in the District of Columbia and before the U.S. Supreme Court. Having served as AOPA's outside general counsel since 2011, Ken brings to the leadership team a unique combination of insight into the workings of the association and a profound understanding of aviation and transportation issues.



Joel Bacon, EVP, Government & Public Affairs | American Association of Airport Executives

Joel Bacon serves as Executive Vice President of Government and Public Affairs for AAAE. In his current role, Joel leads the Association's advocacy and public affairs operations with oversight of legislative and regulatory affairs, transportation security policy, communications, press, public relations, and Airport Magazine.

Joel joined AAAE in 2000 and played a key role for well more than a decade in the development and implementation of the Association's legislative program, focusing on security, budget, and appropriations issues. Prior to joining AAAE, he served as senior manager of legislative affairs with the National Business Aviation Association. Joel began his professional career in the office of Kansas Senator Nancy Landon Kassebaum where he held positions as legislative assistant and press secretary. He also worked for the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee during Senator Kassebaum's term as Chairman. Joel served as the first district director for then-Representative Jerry Moran, who now serves in the United States Senate. [Read more.](#)

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Larry Wade, President and Partner | Golden Isles Aviation

Larry Wade is the President and partner of Golden Isles Aviation, a Phillips 66 and World Fuels Air Elite FBO at the McKinnon Airport on St. Simons Island, GA. He has had this privilege since the purchase of the business in 1986. A private pilot, he has served on the Boards of Exxon Aviatat as well as the Councils of Phillips 66 Aviation and World Fuels Air Elite. He has served on the Airports and Business Committee of NATA, and joined the association's Board of Directors in June 2017.



Matt K. Lewis, Political Commentator, Author and Editor

Matt K. Lewis is a CNN political commentator and author of the book *Too Dumb to Fail: How the GOP Betrayed the Reagan Revolution to Win Elections (and How It Can Reclaim Its Conservative Roots)*. He is also a senior contributor for the *Daily Caller*, a contributing editor for TheWeek.com, and a regular columnist for the *Daily Beast* and the *Telegraph*. Previously, Matt served as a columnist for AOL's Politics Daily, and before that as a blogger for Townhall.com.

RightWingNews named Matt one of the "50 Best Conservative Columnists" in 2013, 2014, and 2015. The American Conservative Union named him the 2012 CPAC Blogger of the Year. *Business Insider* named Matt one of the 50 "Pundits You Need To Pay Attention To Between Now And The Election" in 2011. Additionally, the Young Conservatives Coalition's selected Matt as a recipient of their second annual "Buckley Award" in 2011. Matt's work has also appeared in outlets such as *GQ*, *POLITICO*, and the *Guardian* — and he has been quoted or cited by major media outlets including *New York Magazine*, the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, and the *Associated Press*. As a commentator, Matt has appeared on Fox News, MSNBC, C-SPAN, ABC's *Nightline*, and HBO's *Real Time with Bill Maher*.

Richard Aboulafia, Vice President of Analysis | Teal Group



Richard is Vice President of Analysis at Teal Group. He manages consulting projects in the commercial and military aircraft field and analyzes broader defense and aerospace trends. He has advised numerous aerospace companies, including most prime and many second- and third-tier contractors in the US, Europe and Asia.

He also advises numerous financial institutions on aerospace market conditions. Richard writes and edits Teal Group's World Military and Civil Aircraft Briefing, a forecasting tool covering over 135 aircraft programs and markets. He also writes publicly about aviation and defense, with regular columns in *Aviation Week* and *Space Technology*, AIAA's *Aerospace America*, and at *Forbes.com*. His articles have also appeared in the *Wall Street Journal*, *Financial Times*, *Professional Pilot*, and other publications. [Click here for full bio.](#)



Gregory Schmidt, President and CEO | Pentastar Aviation

Greg is the President & Chief Executive Officer responsible for the overall performance, strategic direction, and long-term growth of Pentastar Aviation. He also currently serves as the Chairman of the Board of Directors for the National Air Transportation Association (NATA) after having served two years as Treasurer. Previously, he served as Pentastar's Senior Vice President & Chief Financial Officer, responsible for the company's financial affairs and the legal, risk management, IT, purchasing and contract management functions. In the decade prior to joining Pentastar Aviation, Mr. Schmidt held numerous leadership roles with Pulte Homes, Inc. During his tenure with Pulte, he served as the President of Pulte Homes of Ohio and also as Manager on the Corporate Asset

Management Committee, overseeing capital investments across the U.S. Mr. Schmidt also served as the founding Secretary & Treasurer on the Board of Directors for the Center for Success Network, a non-profit organization he helped establish, which focuses on providing educational support and life-skills training to children in the cities of Pontiac and Detroit, Michigan and Marion, Indiana.

For more information or to register, please visit www.nata.aero/abr.

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Jeff Ross, President and CEO | Ross Aviation

Since 1992, teams led by Jeff Ross have acquired and successfully operated a total of 34 FBOs including Vail/Beaver Creek Jet Center, Million Air La Quinta at the Desert Resorts Airport, Million Air Palm Springs at the Palm Springs International Airport, and the Newport Jet Center at the John Wayne Airport. At each FBO Jeff's team increased fuel sales, market share, operating profits and ultimately invested capital. This growth was driven by a strict attention to details, well trained and motivated employees and industry growth.

Jeff Ross graduated from the University of Pennsylvania and holds a M.B.A. from the Wharton School of Business. He has lived in Denver since 1981 and is active in community and charitable organizations. Previously, from 1979 through 1991, Jeff was President of the Cairn Companies, a real estate acquisition and investment firm with a strong presence in Denver and Atlanta. Additionally, from 1985 through 1991, Jeff was President of Southeastern Capital Corporation. While at Southeastern, Jeff directed the acquisition, sale and recapitalization of a number of operating companies. [Read more.](#)



Steve Drzymalla, Senior Vice President, Business Aviation Bulk Fuel | World Fuel Services Steve Drzymalla is Senior Vice President, Business Aviation Bulk Fuel and is based in Houston, Texas. In this role, he leads this business segment dedicated to delivering fuel and operating solutions to FBO's including: aviation fuel, deicing fluids, on-airport equipment, FBO software/processing, customer loyalty and customer support.

Steve has developed a deep understanding of the aviation business since joining World Fuel Services back in July of 2010. During this time, he led the Business Aviation Finance function with focus on profitability analysis, strategic planning, business development and acquisition due diligence.

Prior to World Fuel Services, Steve held various financial leadership roles with ExpressJet Airlines and Continental Airlines. He holds a Bachelor's Degree in Mechanical Engineering and an MBA from the University of Texas, San Antonio.



Phil Stearns, Director of Sales and Marketing | Stevens Aviation

Phil Stearns has been with Stevens Aviation since 2006 in territory sales managing all aspects of maintenance, avionics, and refurbishment. He managed Stevens' DAY location and is currently corporate director of sales and marketing. Prior to Stevens, he was in product marketing and project management for 20 years outside the aviation industry. He holds an MBA and is a MEI pilot.



Timothy R. Obitts, EVP of Operations and Business, General Counsel | National Air Transportation Association

Timothy R. Obitts serves as the Executive Vice President Operations and Business, General Counsel, for the National Air Transportation Association (NATA). In this role Mr. Obitts oversees the ongoing business operations of NATA. Prior to joining NATA in November 2014, Mr. Obitts served as the managing partner of Gammon & Grange, P.C. and also served as co-director of the firm's litigation practice. Obitts earned a Juris Doctorate, cum laude, from California Western School of Law and a Bachelor's Degree, double major Philosophy and History, from Gordon College. Obitts is licensed to practice law in California, Colorado, District of Columbia and Virginia. Obitts co-founded Good Samaritan Advocates, a legal aid clinic, and served on numerous nonprofit boards. [Read more.](#)

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Todd Duncan, Chairman | Duncan Aviation

Todd Duncan has a lifelong association with Duncan Aviation, and has worked at the company since 1989 when he started in Aircraft Sales. Since then, he's served in various capacities, most notably as President of the Component Services department and as Vice Chairman. He assumed his current role as Chairman in 2007.

Todd began his flying career in 1987, becoming a licensed private pilot in 1988. He then achieved his instrument rating and his multi-engine rating in 1993. Todd has a Bachelors of Science degree in Business Administration from Nebraska Wesleyan University and has completed the Stanford Executive Program with Stanford University.

Todd has served on the board of directors for several local nonprofit organizations including; Lincoln Children's Museum, Cornhusker Girl Scouts and Junior Achievement. He is also a member of the Nebraska Chapter of the Young Presidents Organization, has been an affiliate of the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association since 1988, serves as NBAA Associate Member on the Advisory Council and is District II Director for the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry. Todd served as Chairman for the NATA and currently serves on the Board of Directors for Nebraska Wesleyan University, Lincoln Chamber of Commerce and Southeast Community College Foundation.



Carol Giles, President & CEO | The Giles Group

Carol E. Giles has more than 35 years of aviation maintenance experience in government and industry. Carol retired from a 21-year FAA career as the senior executive responsible for the Flight Standards Service's Aircraft Maintenance Division, where she led the organization responsible for developing regulations and standards for air carriers, maintenance facilities, general aviation, maintenance technicians and designees.

In 2011, Carol founded The Giles Group, a consulting firm that provides aviation safety services to maintenance organizations, air carriers, manufacturers, suppliers and distributors, as well as international civil aviation authorities. Services include conducting safety and regulatory audits, performing risk assessments, delivering training, providing support for quality assurance continuous improvement, developing/implementing corrective action plans, coordinating certification projects, and providing technical assistance.

Carol also serves as the regulatory liaison for the National Air Transportation Association (NATA). She serves on several industry advisory boards and provided regulatory support and technical assistance to the industry/government advisory rulemaking committee charged with developing recommendations for the FAA on the consistent and standard application of regulations/policy regarding safety oversight and approvals. Recipient of the A4A Nuts and Bolts Award and ARSA's Leo Weston Award, Carol is an FAA-certificated Private Pilot and holds an FAA Airframe and Powerplant Certificate.

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Leo Knaapen, Chief of Industry Affairs | Bombardier

Leo Knaapen is an experienced leader and an influential force in his representation of Bombardier across civil aviation. As Chief of Industry Affairs, he is responsible for strengthening Bombardier's global contributions by engaging, supporting and guiding its involvement in industry associations, regulatory and government agencies through working groups and committees, speaker opportunities, events and sponsorships.

Mr. Knaapen began his career in aerospace at Pratt & Whitney Canada in 1985. He joined Bombardier Aerospace in 1989, and in 1992 was named spokesperson for Bombardier's Canadair division. In 1997, Leo Knaapen assumed responsibility for media and public relations at Bombardier Business Aircraft. In this role, he led the team responsible for communications on a complete range of products including Learjet, Challenger and Global business jets, pre-owned aircraft, Skyjet International charter, special mission aircraft, and customer support and services.

In 2007, he assumed leadership of Bombardier's industry affairs portfolio, and has been instrumental in heightening Bombardier's overall profile within the industry. He has increased the involvement of Bombardier Business Aircraft in key business and general aviation portfolios including safety, environment and air navigation, and has also guided Bombardier's overall engagement with international civil aviation organizations.

Mr. Knaapen currently serves as Chair of the Quebec Chapter of the Canadian Business Aviation Association (CBAA). He is a member of the Bombardier Safety Standdown Advisory Council and also supported the development of the Safety Management Systems involving Design and Manufacturing for ICAO Annex 19. He is the Bombardier representative on the Board of Directors of Geneva-based Air Transport Action Group (ATAG) and sits on the Board of the National Aeronautic Association (NAA) in Washington, D.C.

He graduated from Concordia University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Journalism, and worked at several newspapers and periodicals before entering corporate communications in 1981. He is based at Bombardier Business Aircraft headquarters in Montreal, Canada.