



For Immediate Release

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Contact: Stephanie Griffith
stephanie@aeroclub.org (703) 386-4330

AOPA President and CEO, Mark Baker, to Receive the 2024 Donald D. Engen Aero Club Trophy for Aviation Excellence

Washington, DC – The Board of Governors of the Aero Club of Washington is pleased to announce that Mark Baker, President and CEO of the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA), has been selected as the recipient of the 2024 Donald D. Engen Aero Club Trophy for Aviation Excellence. Baker is being honored for his ambitious leadership and unwavering commitment to general aviation during his 11-year tenure leading AOPA, and for making aviation more accessible, innovative, and safe for every pilot who takes to the skies.

“Don Engen was an icon of excellence and I thank the Aero Club of Washington for this recognition,” said Baker. “Aviation has been a life-long passion, and it has been my privilege to give back to an industry that has given so much to our country and to me personally.”

Established in 1993, the Engen Trophy is awarded for “a record of lifetime achievement; or a single event; or a series of acts by an individual; a team; or by a corporation or organization that reaffirms the Wright Brothers’ standard of excellence in aviation.” Previous recipients include Herb Kelleher, the STS-114 Discovery Shuttle Crew, Scott Crossfield, the Tuskegee Airmen, Linda Hall Daschle, and the 2023 recipient, Ambassador Carol B. Hallett. The permanent trophy resides in the Smithsonian’s National Air and Space Museum.

“Mark Baker is a passionate and tireless advocate for the general aviation community and has led several initiatives over the past decade that have advanced aviation safety and innovation, and made flying more accessible to more people,” said Aero Club President David Richardson. “On behalf of the Aero Club of Washington, I am honored to be the person who will hand the Donald D. Engen Trophy to Mark Baker.”

As just the fifth president of AOPA since its founding in 1939, Baker’s tenure at the association features a litany of significant accomplishments, important victories on behalf of AOPA’s 300,000 member pilots and aircraft owners, and a strong sense of stewardship that benefits every member of the general aviation community every day. Whether it is winning on Capitol Hill and in state houses and town halls across the country; growing the pilot population; protecting airports and airspace; eliminating undue regulations and bringing about necessary reforms; or ensuring that the skies are safer than ever before, general aviation has soared under Baker’s leadership.

AOPA has helped general aviation generate countless opportunities for pilots under Baker’s leadership. Among the organization’s many accomplishments, one that will forever be associated with Baker is the creation of the You Can Fly program, which has established hundreds of flying clubs across the country to make flying more accessible and has helped boost the pilot population by assisting almost 13,000 rusty pilots return to active flying status. The program’s high school aviation STEM curriculum, which is offered free to schools across the nation, has also shown great dividends. More than 70,000 students, many from underserved or minority backgrounds, have earned high school credit for participating in the program since its inception, with more than 60% of graduates reporting that they are pursuing an aviation-related profession.

Baker has also championed aviation safety through AOPA's Air Safety Institute and played a leading role in securing the passage of long overdue reforms to the medical process for private pilots, transitioning the general aviation community away from leaded fuels, and helping the FAA and avionics manufacturers understand the real needs for affordable equipment to satisfy the ADS-B Out mandate.

Baker's commitment and success in advancing general aviation causes has brought him recognition among his peers. In 2018, he was inducted into the Living Legends of Aviation, alongside other aviation entrepreneurs, record-breakers, and innovators.

In January of 2024, Baker announced that he would soon be closing the books on his outstanding 11-year run leading the world's largest civil aviation organization. Reflecting on his decades of achievement, Baker said, "Since receiving my pilot's license as a teenager, I have seen first-hand the value of a strong and prosperous general aviation community. No other place on earth allows the freedoms and opportunities we enjoy in this great nation, and I am honored and humbled to be recognized as having had a hand in promoting, protecting, and growing general aviation for the aviators of today and tomorrow."

The Aero Club of Washington will present the Engen Trophy to Mark Baker at the organization's June 17th luncheon at the Marriott Marquis in Washington, DC. For more information, please visit www.aeroclub.org.

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Background on the Aero Club of Washington

As an industry cornerstone, the Aero Club of Washington is dedicated to providing a forum for discussion of aviation and aerospace issues and achievements. Hosting hundreds of national and international aerospace leaders at its monthly luncheon meetings over the years, the Aero Club has fostered and promoted interest in the principles and development of aeronautics since 1909.