



For Immediate Release

August 1, 2024

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

**Aero Club of Washington Establishes Person of the Year Award -
Names Congressmen Sam Graves and Rick Larsen, and Senators Maria Cantwell
and Ted Cruz as 2024 Recipients**

Washington, DC – The Aero Club of Washington is pleased to announce that its Board of Directors has established a Person of the Year Award and will bestow the 2024 honor to the primary authors of the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 – Representatives Sam Graves (R-MO) and Rick Larsen (D-WA) (the Chairman and Ranking Member, respectively, of the U.S. House of Representatives Transportation and Infrastructure Committee), and Senators Maria Cantwell (D-WA) and Ted Cruz (R-TX) (the Chair and Ranking Member, respectively, of the U.S. Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee).

The newly created award recognizes “a person or persons who have made a positive and significant impact on aviation at the national level within the preceding 18 months.” Chairman Graves, Ranking Member Larsen, Chair Cantwell, and Ranking Member Cruz were selected for this year’s honor for their leadership in crafting and shepherding through Congress the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 (Public Law 118-63), which will enhance aviation safety and infrastructure, grow the nation’s aviation workforce, and advance innovative new technologies to ensure a robust and vibrant future for the aviation system in the United States.

Aero Club President David Richardson praised the selection, “With razor-thin majorities in the House and Senate, it is not easy enacting any major piece of legislation in today’s Congress; however, the ‘four corners’ of aviation – Chairs Cantwell and Graves and Ranking Members Cruz and Larsen – have demonstrated an amazing degree of savvy, patience, hard work, substantive knowhow, and, most of all, leadership, in assembling and passing – with huge bipartisan support – one of the most important pieces of aviation legislation of the first quarter of the 21st Century. On behalf of the Aero Club of Washington, it’s my pleasure to announce our inaugural Persons of the Year Award and to express our gratitude for their superb leadership in Congress and for advancing sound policies that touch every aspect of the aviation sector.”

“I’m humbled and honored to receive this award from the Aero Club of Washington,” expressed Chairman Graves. “Aviation has been in my blood for most of my life, and as a professional pilot, it was incredibly important to me to work with Ranking Member Larsen and Senators Cantwell and Cruz to shepherd the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 through Congress. The United States has been gold standard in aviation safety and innovation, and this law will help ensure we remain the world leader for years to come. I am particularly proud that this landmark aviation legislation included the first-ever title dedicated to general aviation – the backbone of America’s aviation system.”

Ranking Member Larsen stated, “I’m honored to receive the Aero Club of Washington’s Person of the Year Award alongside Chairman Graves, Chair Cantwell and Ranking Member Cruz. As Ranking Member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, I worked with Chairman Graves and my T&I colleagues—along with our counterparts in the Senate—to pass the bipartisan, long-term FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 earlier this year. This critical legislation maintains America’s leadership in aviation safety and aerospace innovation, strengthens and diversifies our aviation workforce, improves consumer protections and accessibility and makes groundbreaking investments in sustainability and resiliency. The FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 will create a safer, cleaner, greener and more accessible aviation system here in the U.S.”

“I am honored to be recognized by the Aero Club alongside my Congressional colleagues,” stated Ranking Member Cruz. “We worked closely together to pass a bipartisan, bicameral FAA reauthorization that both modernizes and transforms our nation’s aviation system. The Aero Club pays homage to our nation’s unique standing as the global leader in aviation innovation, and our bill continues this legacy by beginning to integrate the novel technologies into the national airspace while making flying safer, cheaper, and easier for travelers across the country.”

The Aero Club of Washington will present the Persons of the Year Award at the 76th Annual Wright Memorial Dinner on December 13th at the Westin Washington DC Downtown Hotel. Ben Baldanza, Former President & CEO of Spirit Airlines, will also be honored with the [National Aeronautic Association’s 2024 Wright Brothers Memorial Trophy](#) at the same event. For more information, please visit www.aeroclub.org.

###

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.