



# VIEW*S* & VISIONS

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## A Window Seat to the World

The Honorable John D. Rockefeller, IV  
United States Senator

Senator Jay Rockefeller has proudly served the people of West Virginia for over 40 years. He first came to West Virginia in 1964 as a 27-year-old VISTA volunteer, serving in the small mining community of Emmons.

In 1966, he was elected to the West Virginia House of Delegates and to the office of West Virginia Secretary of State in 1968. He served as President of West Virginia Wesleyan College from 1973 to 1976. In 1976, he was elected Governor of West Virginia, and was re-elected in 1980. In 1984, he was elected to the United States Senate, and re-elected in 1990, 1996, 2002 and 2008.

Senator Rockefeller is the chairman of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. He is also the chairman of the Health Care Subcommittee on Finance; and a member of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. He also serves on the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Senator Rockefeller graduated from Harvard University in 1961 with a B.A. in Far Eastern languages and history.

I believe in opening up West Virginia to the world.

It's a stance that takes several forms. Investing in education spurs innovation and growth and broadens our horizons. Investments in science and technology create a foundation on which our state's high-tech sector flourishes.

West Virginia's aviation industry is no different. It's often overlooked in our state as an engine of economic growth, but the fact remains: it is a critical part of this state's prosperity.

Just look around the state. In Bridgeport, the Mid-Atlantic Aerospace Complex (MAAC) supports more than 1,000 aviation-related jobs in the region that have a collective economic impact of \$52 million annually.

In Beckley, Raleigh County Memorial Airport has spawned an enormously successful business park at the facility, and is poised to be a hub of transportation and tourism with the arrival of thousands of visitors to the Bechtel Summit Reserve in Fayette County, the Boy Scouts' new adventure center and home of the 2013 Boy Scout Jamboree.

**West Virginia's aviation industry is no different. It's often overlooked in our state as an engine of economic growth, but the fact remains: it is a critical part of this state's prosperity.**

Our strong aviation system is helping spur this growth. Commercial air service is a



linchpin for economic development in small communities. One of the key factors businesses look for when investing in a community is its quality of air service. It provides a vital connection to the global marketplace from which they would otherwise be isolated.

For these reasons I have fought to maintain a robust Essential Air Service (EAS) program and fully fund the Airport Improvement Program. Air service and airports are economic engines that attract critical new jobs and development opportunities to small communities like those in West Virginia.

I became the senior Democratic member of the Aviation Subcommittee in 1998, and now serve as the chairman of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation.



I love the work I'm able to do in this position on behalf of West Virginians, not the least of which is because it affords me the opportunity to continue my strong support of West Virginia's aviation industry.

The benefits of a robust air transportation infrastructure don't stop at our state's borders, of course.

By any measure, the aviation sector has a substantial impact on our country's economy. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) estimates civil aviation supports more than 10 million jobs nationally and is responsible for more than five percent of the nation's gross domestic product (GDP). It also is a leading source of U.S. exports, contributing more than \$75 billion toward the nation's trade balance through the sale of civilian aircraft engines, equipment and parts to foreign entities.

Just as important, aviation plays a critical role in facilitating our nation's commerce

by connecting all regions of our country together, and our businesses to the global marketplace.

It is the mode of transportation that makes it possible for consumers to order products online and receive them in the mail the next day, pharmaceutical companies to deliver critical drugs or devices anywhere overnight and for businesses to send employees to the other side of the globe in a day.

The aviation industry is fundamental to our nation's long-term economic health, and it is important for us to take the measures needed to make certain the U.S. aviation sector remains competitive.

We need to continue to push the FAA to accelerate the implementation of next generation air traffic control systems. We need to make serious commitments to the basic research and development that will help our businesses maintain their technological edge. And, perhaps most importantly, we need to invest in our

workforce. It is our people that are the industry's most important asset. We need to make sure they have the training they need and that we are fostering the next generation of scientists, engineers, and mathematicians.

That's good news for the country, and great news for West Virginians, who have a window seat from which to explore the world. ▽