

Gerald Baliles
Former Governor of Virginia

In 1986, under Governor Baliles' leadership, the Virginia General Assembly passed what was until then the largest transportation funding package in Virginia history. While much of the media attention at that time focused on the highway portion of the package, it also included important funding for airports throughout the Commonwealth.



The benefits of that program remain in place today. In answering questions of why he supported funding for small, General Aviation airports, he explained that these airports provide important access to the air transport system, no matter where they are located. Governor Baliles not only got the money flowing, but his efforts to educate the media, the public, and legislators about the importance of these airports paid dividends far beyond the funding package. Additionally, he was tremendously supportive of the National Air & Space Museum's Udvar-Hazy Center, and his direct involvement was integral to the Center's creation.

His personal efforts and intervention also helped ensure passage by the Virginia General Assembly of the legislation to enact The Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority. Governor Baliles worked hard to attract NASA's space station headquarters to Reston, VA, and he was a strong advocate and pioneer in making Virginia an integral part of the nation's space program.

Over the years, the former governor has led a variety of aviation-related coalitions and special projects, such as being appointed by President Clinton to chair the National Commission to Ensure a Strong Competitive Airline Industry. And asked by the U.S. Secretary of Transportation in 1994 to facilitate talks between US Airways and its pilots' union which had reached deadlock. In 1996 he was asked to lead a coalition in favor of an expanded air service agreement with Japan. All of which were successful.

His leadership positively and importantly influenced the future of aviation in the Commonwealth, as well as nationally and internationally.