

Advocacy Organizations

Warren Silberman, D.O.

I am honored to be the new AsMA President and thrilled to present my first article for the AsMA Journal. For this initial article, I will discuss and educate the readers of our journal about what I have referred to over the years as “advocacy organizations.” In my definition, these are organizations that advocate for pilots. This includes those that also advocate for airports, aircraft maintenance guidelines, air traffic control specialists, and just flying in general. The two major organizations that people involved in aviation should think of, especially in the United States, are the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) and the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA). There are other advocacy organizations, such as the Airline Pilots Association (ALPA), the union representing many of the major airline pilots. One can also add physician groups that advocate for pilots; for example, the Mayo Clinic and the University of Texas Medical Branch Galveston (UTMB). I would also include private medical groups and individual physicians, but I don't want to list them since there are many, and I don't want to leave anyone out. But I will concentrate on the first two, AOPA and EAA.

AOPA recently celebrated its 85th year. It is an organization with approximately 300,000 members. There is also an international branch. Ultimately, this organization's goal is to protect one's freedom to fly. They achieve this by collaborating with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to modify regulations that their membership believes are too restrictive, or by promoting initiatives that the government aims to implement, such as the push for unleaded fuel replacement. They have sections

that address legal issues, support airports and airport improvements, and provide aircraft and pilot insurance, as well as aircraft financing. What I have become most involved with is supporting pilots who have developed medical issues or who are caught in the quagmire at the FAA. AOPA also has a great Foundation engaged in promoting safety, called the AOPA Safety Foundation. The AOPA produces a great magazine called “AOPA Pilot.” They used to put on “Summits” at airports around the United States that have morphed into “AOPA Fly-Ins.” These are significant events where locals drive or people fly their planes, see static displays, listen to speakers on hot topics, and get to see aviation-related products. One of AOPA's key advocacy items is a phone bank staffed by employees who answer questions about aircraft, regulations, legal aviation issues, and medical problems. Their members pay a small fee to join and then incur additional costs for some of the other advocacy services.

Due to my background, I am most familiar with AOPA's medical department. Gary Crump has headed it for the past 30+ years. Gary and the team are highly knowledgeable about the FAA medical regulations. His employees are many times as knowledgeable as the seasoned examiners who work in the FAA's medical certification division. They will provide their pilot members with answers to what the FAA requires on a medical condition and assist them with preparing a waiver packet for presentation to the FAA. They collaborate with a select group of chosen aviation medical examiners to deal with issues affecting their members.

The other organization, EAA, is responsible for putting on the largest and greatest airshow in the United States and possibly the world. Air Venture Oshkosh, or “OSHKOSH” for short, is the airshow that occurs at the end of July and/or early August every year held in Oshkosh, WI, and attracts over one million people. People attend from all over the world. The FAA considers it so important that the FAA Administrator and his/her Associate Administrators attend, and the best of the best FAA Air Traffic Controllers direct the traffic. Many times, the Secretary of Transportation comes, as do numerous U.S. Congressmen and Senators who are interested in aviation-related matters.



Left: Dr. Silberman outside the AOPA tent at OSHKOSH. Right: Dr. Silberman in front of a Cirrus airplane at an AOPA Summit in Frederick, MD.

Reprint and copyright © by the Aerospace Medical Association, Alexandria, VA.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3357/AMHP.966PP.2025>

CONTACT DETAILS:

Email: President@asma.org • **Website:** www.asma.org • **Facebook:** Aerospace Medical Association • **X:** @Aero_Med

PRESIDENT'S PAGE, *continued*

A flight of P-51 Warbird Mustangs flying over Lake Winnebago at OSHKOSH.

EAA, with 240,000 members, has a group of fine people who run the business of the organization, but its main lifeline is a vast group of volunteers who help out at OSHKOSH and run local chapters made up of pilots and interested people. Their advocacy extends to aircraft homebuilding, restoration of aircraft, Warbird, and ultralight operations.

EAA has a wonderful program called the Young Eagles. This program offers young people flights to get them interested in flying careers. This is also completely voluntary. Each



An early morning flight of USAF T-28s at OSHKOSH.

year at OSHKOSH, the EAA holds an evening dinner where they auction off various items to raise funds to support different events to support the program. Notable aviators, including Chuck Yeager and Harrison Ford, have served as chairs of this program.

As for the medical advocacy portion of EAA, they have a group of volunteer physicians, most of them AMEs, who make themselves available to members, assisting them with medical certification advice and preparation of their medical conditions to present to the FAA for a decision.