

Small Businessman Cooling Has Made Big Impact on NBAA Board



James E. Cooling has served nine years on the NBAA Board of Directors and is nearing the end of his term, but his contributions to the Association will be felt long after he departs the Board this fall. Cooling, CEO of Cooling & Herbers, P.C. – a Kansas City-based law firm that specializes in aviation transactions, product liability, insurance and commercial litigation – has used his expertise to help NBAA's governing body meet a host of challenges.

As a member of the Board, Cooling has been a voice for single-aircraft operators and flight department members. He has served the Association in various roles: as a founding member of NBAA's Tax Committee and, for the last two years, as chairman of the Nominating Committee. He also was a member of the Board Selection Committee that recommended Ed Bolen as the new CEO of NBAA.

The owner-pilot, who has used his Piper Seneca III to help expand his law practice, has been actively involved in helping NBAA attract more operators of turboprop- and piston-powered airplanes, an initiative that led to the recent establishment of the Technical Committee's King Air Subcommittee. And his ties to the Experimental Aircraft Association have helped bring NBAA and the grassroots aviation group closer together.

Although Cooling flies his airplane primarily on a regional basis, he has had a strong interest in NBAA's international activities and was a Board representative at the inaugural EBACE meeting in Geneva in 2001 and the inaugural ABACE meeting in Shanghai in 2005.

Another priority for Cooling has been to foster better relations between aircraft operators and regulators, which is not surprising considering his father was a military and airline

pilot turned Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) inspector, who was among the first to conduct check rides in first-generation business jets. Given the FAA's recent crackdown on charter and airline operators, Cooling feels that improving operator-regulator relations needs to be a continuing priority.

Cooling's expertise in aviation law and insurance matters factored in several important decisions during his tenure. As past president of the Aviation Insurance Association, he provided some useful advice when NBAA had to consider whether to postpone or cancel the NBAA 54th Annual Meeting & Convention (NBAA2001) in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Cooling suggested a review of the Convention insurance policy to see if the Association was entitled to compensation because of the extraordinary circumstances that made it virtually impossible to hold the event as scheduled, just one week after the attacks. Fortunately, NBAA was able to reschedule NBAA2001 for December of that year, enabling the Association to avoid losing a substantial amount of revenue had the event been cancelled.

"NBAA is a terrific organization. I intend to stay active," he said recently. Issues that he believes need to be addressed include developing an aircraft ownership structure that provides operators a "safe harbor" and helps them meet the various and conflicting governmental regulations. Although Cooling says safety always is the most important issue, he also is concerned about the outcome of the user fee debate, airport and airspace access, the impact of new security regulations and the effect of fuel price increases. No doubt, he will continue to make his voice heard on those issues. ✦



Photos provided by James E. Cooling