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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, DECEMBER 8, 2010

NEW AIR SAFETY GROUP AIMS FOR CHILD SEAT MANDATE;
APPLAUDS NTSB EFFORTS

WASHINGTON, D.C., DECEMBER 8, 2010 -- Formation of a new air safety advocacy group, one aimed at winning an FAA mandate that children under age two sit in restraint seats on airline flights, was announced here today on the eve of a National Transportation Safety Board forum on child safety. The mandate would end the practice of parents holding children under two on their laps, which the FAA allows.

The new group, Safe Seats for Every Air Traveler (SSEAT), will be co-chaired by John Goglia, air safety authority and past NTSB member, and Jan Brown, a veteran air safety advocate and the lead flight attendant on United 232 which crashed in Sioux City, Iowa on July 19, 1989, killing 112 of the 296 on board, including one 22 month old "lap child."

Goglia and Brown said the new group's exclusive goal was "a clear, immediate and enforceable directive that on commercial flights parents must place children under age two in child restraint seats like those used in cars." The co-chairs said they would take their case to appropriate Executive Branch agencies including the FAA, OMB, as well as to Members of Congress. The mandate would require either an FAA directive or Congressional enactment. NTSB Chair Deborah Hersman has long supported a Child Restraint Seat (CRS) mandate.

In a statement announcing the formation of the group, co-chairs Brown and Goglia commended the NTSB's focus on the child seat issue as most appropriate and in keeping with its support of the mandate. They said:

"We thank the Chair Hersman and the NTSB for targeting the child seat and broader child safety issues at tomorrow's forum.

"Now it's time for the FAA and Congress to do what's right. The FAA stated it would issue a mandate 11 years ago but later reneged.

“Government mandated driving laws require infants be secured in approved car seats. But when it comes to flying in an airplane the most vulnerable of our children, those under age two, are left unprotected.

“What makes matters worse is that many parents with whom we have spoken believe it’s safe for a child to fly in Mom or Dad’s fragile grasp because the FAA allows it.

“Anyone in aviation knows that a parent’s arms, no matter how strong, are inadequate to harness a child in the event of severe turbulence, rapid deceleration or crash.

“The fact remains that lap children are not the only ones at risk. They pose a significant danger to other passengers. In strong turbulence a 15 pound child can become 75 pound cannon ball.

“SSEAT looks forward to working with other organizations which support a CRS mandate, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Association of Flight Attendants, and the National Air Disaster Alliance/Foundation.

“Curiously, the FAA recommends CRS use but rejects a mandate. The agency claims that parents would balk at paying for the additional seat and resort to the nation’s highways, which it considers less safe.

“An NTSB study refutes that tortured FAA assertion. The NTSB study found no corresponding increase in highway fatalities in periods when air travel declined markedly, specifically during the 1981 air traffic controllers’ strike, the 1991 Gulf War, and following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.

“Our newly formed group, Safe Seats for Every Air Traveler (SSEAT), will work to build a coalition of support to provide safety for our most vulnerable passengers. Ironically, on every commercial flight today, passengers must secure their laptops and carry-on items. We need to do even better for our most vulnerable passengers.”

Brown and Goglia said that they would announce the names of several vice-chairs and other members of the new organization before year-end. SSEAT will be headquartered in Schaumburg, Illinois.

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