Business and Corporate Aviation
In 2008, the CEOs of the big three automakers flew on corporate-owned jets to Washington, D.C., to request taxpayer bailout money. The public outrage over what was seen as lavish spending, combined with recessionary belt-tightening, caused the near collapse of corporate aviation. However, it wasn’t long before companies that had abandoned or drastically downsized their fleets, began revving up their engines. Despite the negative optics of what had happened in D.C., the benefits of business aviation, being more competitive and efficient in the U.S. and globally, won out.

Time is a finite resource and corporate jets allow executives to make maximum use of it, particularly in the case of global companies with foreign operations and markets that are continents away or in less densely populated areas. While the public may see the corporate jet as a status symbol, companies see it as a business tool and, in fact, a recent study shows that 78 percent of corporate jet passengers are below the C-suite.

Whether you operate one aircraft or a fleet, or you’re just first considering starting a flight department, LeClairRyan’s Business and Corporate Aviation team can provide transactional, regulatory and litigation counsel you need. Our team regularly assists clients with:

- Regulatory compliance, including Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Department of Transportation (DOT) and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) regulations, certifications, filings and reporting
- Regulatory enforcement defense, including FAA, DOT and Transportation Security Administration (TSA) actions
- Aircraft accident and incident investigations, including National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) investigations
- Accident litigation, including negligence, product liability and Federal Tort Claims Act claims
- Emergency preparedness and response, including crisis management
- International aviation, including treaties and protocols
- Insurance and risk management
- Employment issues, including licensing, certification and registration
- Aviation safety
- Hazardous materials and environmental law
- Business aviation security
- Purchase and lease of aircraft and equipment, including fractional aircraft ownership, and asset-based financing
- Management and maintenance agreements
A top-flight legal team
Our attorneys know every aspect of the aviation sector. Several members of our team have worked at the regulatory agencies and all have years of experience representing private operators; international, national, and regional airlines; charter companies; aviation service providers; manufacturers; aircraft leasing companies; and airport developers regarding a range of aircraft and aerospace vehicles, including business and private aircraft, commercial aircraft, helicopters, satellites and drones. In addition, our multi-jurisdictional team knows the laws and regulations governing flight operations wherever you do business.

Our team is nationally recognized for its expertise and experience in this complex area of the law. Below are some recent accolades:

- Team members Mark Dombroff and Diane Westwood Wilson are listed in a number of highly respected legal directories, including Euromoney's World's Leading Aviation Lawyers, Chambers USA, The Legal 500, The International Who's Who of Aviation Lawyers and New York Super Lawyers
- Mark regularly provides commentary on Fox News, CNN, CSPAN, CNBC and MSNBC and other leading cable news channels
- Our team’s Plane-ly Spoken blog (www.planelyspokenblog.com), commentary on regulation and litigation impacting the aviation industry, is widely read around the world

Government Investigations and civil litigation
Aviation is one of the most highly-regulated industries in the world and the consequences of noncompliance can range from civil monetary penalties to criminal charges. Our team will make sure you stay on the right side of the regulators.

Led by Alexandria, Va. shareholder Mark Dombroff, a former trial attorney with the FAA’s Office of the General Counsel and Director of the Civil Division of the Aviation Unit of the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), and Diane Westwood Wilson, whose career has been uniquely international in scope, including representing a national airline and flag carrier in what is arguably the most significant international airline law case ever decided by the U.S. Supreme Court, our team has counseled and guided numerous clients through aircraft accident and incident investigations by the FAA, NTSB litigation and appeals, airplane safety and compliance audits, and civil litigation and criminal prosecutions.
Our experience in the U.S. includes federal and state courts in all 50 states and the U.S. territories. Internationally, we have advised on aviation litigation matters in Afghanistan, Belize, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Congo, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, France, Guam, India, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Malaysia, Spain South Africa, South Korea, the United Kingdom, the former Soviet Union and over international waters. The chart below lists some of our many representations:

- Air Century Flight CEY521 (Dominican Republic)
- Air India Express Flight 812 (Mangalore)
- Air Serv International B-1900 (Democratic Republic of Congo)
- Alaska Airlines Flight 261 (Los Angeles)
- American Airlines Flight 191 (Chicago)
- American Eagle Flight 4184 (Roselawn, IN)
- Arrow Air crash (Gander, Newfoundland)
- British Airways Flight 149 (during invasion of Kuwait)
- Colgan Air Flight 3407 (Buffalo)
- Continental Airlines Flight 128 (severe turbulence)
- Flying Tigers Flight 66 (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia)
- In re Deep Vein Thrombosis Litigation
- Japan Airlines Mount Gumna Crash (Japan)
- Korean Airlines 007 (shoot-down by USSR)
- Korean Air Flight 6316 (Shanghai, China)
- National Airlines Flight 102 (Bagram, Afghanistan)
- Northwest Airlines Flight 1482 (Detroit)
- Southwest Airlines Flight 1248 (Chicago)
- Swissair Flight 111
- US Airways Flight 405 (New York)
- US Airways Flights 1016 and 5481 (Charlotte)
- US Airways Flight 427 (Pittsburgh)
- US Airways Flight 1549 (the “Miracle on the Hudson”)
- TAM Airlines Flight 402 (Sao Paulo, Brazil)
- The Galloping Ghost at the National Championship Air Races (Reno)
- Tropic Air Flight 9N2300 (Belize)
- TWA Flight 800
- United Airlines Flight 232 (Sioux City)
Regulatory compliance counseling
LeClairRyan also handles non-accident/incident-related safety and regulatory compliance and enforcement matters before the FAA, the NTSB and other administrative agencies, including the TSA, DHS and Departments of State, Justice and Treasury.

We provide regulatory counseling and representation to not only corporate flight departments, but also commercial carriers, including Southwest Airlines, Mesa Airlines, SkyWest Airlines, Trans States Airlines, Virgin America, Spirit Airlines, Empire Airlines, and a wide range of aviation services providers, including airports, fuelers, ground handlers, fixed base operators, maintenance and overhaul companies, catering companies, and security companies.

Business aviation security
The world is a dangerous place and business aircrafts remain a high-value target for criminal threats and international terrorism. Keeping your passengers and crew safe should be your top priority. LeClairRyan can assist you in identifying and mitigating security threats to your aircraft, while on the ground and in flight, and steps travelers can take to ensure their own personal safety when away from your base of operation.

Emergency preparedness and response
Our team is deeply experienced in all phases of airline emergency preparedness and response for incidents and accidents. Examples of our leadership in this area include:

• We created an Aviation Emergency Response website and an accompanying handbook with checklists and other information that will be invaluable to you in addressing the hours and days after an incident or accident FAA and NTSB requests as well as potential civil and criminal litigation. Both website and handbook are updated and supplemented as needed to ensure that they contain the most current information and guidance.
• For the past 10 years, our team has hosted The Airline Symposium, an annual, three-day event that includes topical panels, plain-spoken panelists and Q&A sessions so substantive that many airlines have made attendance part of their training programs.
• We also host The Airline Symposium Webinar Series, periodic webinars on topics related to emergency response, from dealing with witnesses and documents in the immediate aftermath of an incident or accident – be it a slip-and-fall on the plane or tarmac, a claim of food poisoning, an emergency evacuation, an aircraft running off the runway, or a catastrophic accident – to how to be an effective part of an FAA or NTSB investigation.
• In the event of an accident, we will be on the scene or at your corporate command center to ensure that you understand the responsibilities of first responders and that you are fully informed on developments as they unfold, and to work with your accident response team and the individual in your organization who has authority to promptly address requests by NTSB or other investigators. We can also advise you regarding foreign claims and litigation and applicable international treaties. And we will always provide advice that is consistent with your broader concerns, from protection of your brand and customer base to mitigation of any impact on financial markets.
We have assisted the following companies with their training exercises and in responding to incidents or accidents:

- AAR
- AIG Aviation
- Air Century
- Air Serv
- Air Serv International
- Alaska Airlines
- American Airlines
- American Empire
- Ametek
- Atom Airways
- Aviation Technical Svcs B/E Aerospace
- AAR
- Blue Hawaiian Helicopters
- Colgan Air
- Corporate Air
- Crane Co.
- Delta Airlines
- El AL Israel Airlines
- Empire Airlines
- Evergreen Helicopters
- Global Aerospace
- Hahn Air
- Jetstream Aviation
- McKee Foods
- Mesa Airlines
- Miami Air
- Mid East Jet
- Mountain Air Cargo
- National Air Cargo
- Phoenix Air Group
- Pinnacle Airways
- Piper Aircraft
- Polaris Aviation
- Presidential Airways
- PSA Airlines
- Republic Airways
- Sierra Nevada Corp.
- SkyWest Airlines
- Southwest Airlines
- Spirit Airlines
- StandardAero
- Sun Country Airlines
- Swissport
- Tropic Air
- United Airlines
- UPS Airlines
- Virgin Galactic Ventures
- World Airways
- US Airways
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