



## State of Connecticut

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Sen. Kevin Kelly  
Testimony  
Transportation Committee  
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In Support of: Senate Bill No. 772: AN ACT DESIGNATING AUGUST FOURTEENTH AS  
GUSTAVE WHITEHEAD DAY

Senator Maynard, Representative Guerrero, Senator Boucher, Representative O'Dea and members of the Transportation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of S.B. 772 An Act Designating August Fourteenth as Gustave Whitehead Day.

Gustave Whitehead is an important part of Bridgeport history, Connecticut history, and our nation's history. As an aviation pioneer who came to the United States from Germany in 1893, he embodied the American dream and Connecticut spirit of innovation. He also became the first man to make a manned, powered, controlled flight on August 14, 1901 near Bridgeport, Connecticut.

While many fans of the Wright brothers have tried to deny the legitimacy of Whitehead's first flight, thanks to new evidence that resurfaced and was shared by the annual aviation encyclopedia "Jane's All the World Airplanes," Connecticut has officially recognized Whitehead as the first person to take flight, an event that occurred two years before the Wright brothers flew in Kitty Hawk, N.C.

In a January 1935 Popular Aviation article, Whitehead's first flight is described in detail: "The mile and a half flight, made August 14, 1901, occurred at Lordship Manor, now a suburb of Bridgeport..." the article reads.

"One day, [the No. 21 airplane] was pushed into the street from the backyard of the modest house, 241 Pine Street, which was then the Whitehead home... Inside it, two engines were humming, one for propelling the wheels on which it was to get its start upon the ground, the other to turn the propellers when the machine was in the air. The small boys of the neighborhood

came running, attracted by the unusual...They drew excited breaths of awe, and whistled through their teeth as the creature dashed down the road, rose from the ground, not many feet higher than their heads, and flew above the dirt road that was then Pine Street." ("Did Whitehead Precede Wright in World's First Powered Flight?" by Stella Randolph and Harvey Phillips)

With the incredible leadership of Representative Larry Miller over the years, Connecticut has stood together united in recognizing the legitimacy and incredible contribution made by Whitehead. In 2013, we passed Public Act 13-210, which specifies that Powered Flight Day is in honor of the first powered flight by Gustave Whitehead, rather than the Wright Brothers. In 2014, Connecticut also passed a resolution officially recognizing Connecticut as first in flight and honoring Whitehead's flight for paving the way for Connecticut to be a leader in aviation innovation.

I am proposing SB 772 to further this recognition and celebration of Whitehead by commemorating the exact day of Whitehead's first flight.

The state of Ohio, the birthplace of the Wright brothers, has not taken kindly to Connecticut's recognition of Gustave Whitehead. Ohio State Representative Rick Perales has even proposed a bill this year (HCR63) that declares "Gustave Whitehead did not fly a powered, heavier-than-air machine of his own design on August 14, 1901, or on any other date." Facing this opposition, Connecticut must stand strongly behind the history we know to be true. SB 772 will send a clear message: Connecticut was the birthplace of powered flight. Celebrating the exact historic day that changed history, we can ensure future generations never forget.