

Senate Bill 739 Testimony

Hello my name is Jeff Bishop with the Bridgeport Regional Business Council. I am also the former Executive Director of the Discovery Museum and Planetarium here in Bridgeport Connecticut. While the Executive Director of the Discovery Museum we celebrated the 110th anniversary of Gustave Whiteheads first powered flight on August 14th 2011 at the museum with a huge event and exhibit. We had dignitaries from the Gustave Whitehead Museum in Germany as our guests. We also had special guests from the United States including Congressman Himes, Senator Blumenthal, members of Gustave Whiteheads family and John Ratzenberger. We also had the Mayor of Bridgeport, Bill Finch, skype with the Mayor of Leutershausen Germany, the birthplace of Gustave Whitehead.

We had a large exhibit that chronicled Gustave Whitehead's first flight with eye witness testimony pictures of his aircraft and workshop. One of the most compelling items in the exhibit was a copy of the contract that the Wright Brothers Estate had with Smithsonian Institution, which stated that the Smithsonian could continue to exhibit the Wright Brothers aircraft provided they maintain that the Wright Brothers were first in flight. If the Wright Brothers were in fact first in flight why would they include this clause in their contract with the Smithsonian ?

The following year, we flew over Mr. John Brown, an engineer and historian from Germany, who's research and data was submitted to Jane's All The Worlds Aircraft in the UK (Jane's All the World's Aircraft is the World's leading authority on air flight and aircraft design). Based on this research and data, Jane's All the Worlds Aircraft came out and officially announced that Gustave Whitehead was in fact first in powered flight two years before the Wright Brothers in 2013. You can view all of John Brown's research and data at www.gustave-whitehead.com .

We continue to be puzzled by the Smithsonian's insistence that the Wright Brothers were first in flight considering the overwhelming evidence. We are also puzzled that the Smithsonian would continue to support history by contract. As a taxpayer supported organization we as taxpayers should be asking why history is being written and support by a government entity by contract. We in no way want to diminish the contributions to air travel by the Wright Brothers; however, we do want to give credit where credit is due and get our history right.

We had a replica of Gustave Whiteheads number 21 aircraft hanging in the lobby of the Discovery Museum in Bridgeport Connecticut (I believe the only exhibit honoring Gustave Whitehead in the United States). I always found it curious that people attending the museum who were from outside the United States knew what the exhibit was and that Gustave Whitehead was first in flight (here in Connecticut BTW) and that the people from the United States had no idea who Gustave Whitehead was or what he accomplished.

Senate Bill 739 will go a long way as well as have a loud voice in getting the word out and establishing the fact that Gustave Whitehead was First in Powered Flight here in the great state of Connecticut.