

Airline Business Award



Presented to

Norman Mineta, former US Transportation Secretary



Norman Mineta

ian Billingshurst

Norman Y Mineta's biography reads like an American legend: the child to immigrant parents, the victim of childhood discrimination, hard work, progress up the ladder and recognition. But for a man known in the world of aviation and in Washington's inner circle as either Mr Chairman or Mr Secretary, Norman Mineta's career is marked by warmth and affection, as well as respect.

Coming to the US House of Representatives as a Democrat after serving as mayor of his home town, San Jose in California, Mineta quickly rose on the House Transportation Committee and its Aviation Subcommittee, as much for his collegial approach to legislative issues as his grasp of the subject matter. In his two decades in congress, Mineta was the "go-to" guy on airline and airport problems as he shepherded much of the era's landmark aviation legislation through the House. Airline labour consulted him as much as airline management did.

After leaving Congress in 1995, Mineta chaired the National Civil Aviation Review Commission (NCARC), which in 1997 issued recommendations that became the basis for FAA reform. Mineta became the Secretary of Transportation under President George W Bush in 2001, serving until 2006 and becoming the longest-serving Transportation Secretary since the agency was created in 1967. He is one of only four cabinet secretaries in US history to have served under both a Democrat (as Bill Clinton's Commerce Secretary) and a Republican (under the younger Bush).

In his tenure at the Department of Transportation, Mineta was at the helm through the crisis of September 2001 and led the creation of the Transportation Security Administration, meeting challenging congressional mandates and timelines for the establishment of the new and complex agency before it was transferred to the newly created Department of Homeland Security

in 2003. At the DoT, as in Congress, Mineta led the way on developing international standards and co-operation in aviation.

Mineta has long been a voice for liberalisation and, after returning to the private sector in 2006, has continued to encourage greater aviation freedoms. Before he left the DoT, Mineta oversaw the introduction of a proposal to encourage greater foreign investment in US flag carriers, a proposal that ultimately helped lead to a breakthrough in long stalled US-European Union negotiations on Transatlantic Open Skies.

Mineta says his proudest accomplishment was managing legislation that formalised an apology to Japanese Americans imprisoned in the early years of World War II, of which he was one. While interned, Mineta developed a friendship with a Boy Scout named Alan Simpson. Simpson later rose to the US Senate as a conservative Republican from Wyoming but the friendship continued marking Mineta's lifelong bipartisanship.

The NCARC, which Mineta chaired in 1997, was the first major bipartisan formulation of the FAA's need to become a performance-based provider of air navigation services and to develop a cost-based revenue stream. Work on these challenging long-term goals continues.

David Field



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Past winners

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"Mineta was at the helm through the crisis of September 2001"