Scott Howell: City's new airport should be Jake Garn International

Jake Garn International Airport.

It's the perfect name for Salt Lake City's newly modernized air transportation hub. First, Jake is a local product. He was born in Richfield, but he grew up in Salt Lake City, where he attended the city's public schools. He graduated from East High School and the University of Utah.

Second, Jake has a lifelong connection to aviation. He developed a love of airplanes and flight through his father, who was a true aviation pioneer. The senior Garn received the first pilot's license issued by the state of Utah, and he later became Utah's first commissioner of aviation.

Young Jake learned to fly as a teenager. During the Korean War, Jake joined the U.S. Navy and flew fighter missions over North Korea from aircraft carriers. When his enlistment ran out, he returned to Utah and joined the Utah Air National Guard. He flew giant tankers to refuel other planes in flight. Eventually, he became a brigadier general in the Utah Air National Guard. He accumulated more than 10,000 flight hours.

After he "retired," Jake bought a surplus military training aircraft, rebuilt it, and thrilled in flying it around the state. Even today, in his mid-80s, one of Jake's greatest joys is having his son, a commercial pilot, fly Jake in his rebuilt trainer around the valley.