

**U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
Subcommittee on Aviation
Regarding H.R. 2107 - End Gridlock at Our Nations Critical Airports Act of 2001**

**Statement of Jack Saporito for US-Citizens Aviation Watch Association and also,
The Alliance of Residents Concerning O'Hare**

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I am Jack Saporito, executive director of the Alliance of Residents Concerning O'Hare (AReCO). Locally, the Alliance represents members in 28 communities, including Chicago, that are affected by O'Hare Airport operations.

I am also the president of US-Citizens Aviation Watch Association, of which AReCO is a founding member. Nationally, the Association is the leading public-advocacy group focusing on aviation issues, representing various municipalities and organizations; it speaks for about 1.5 million members in the United States. The Association is also a non-governmental organization, representing member and associate organizations in 27 countries.

Our membership includes physicians as well as individuals who are employed in the aviation and aerospace industries: pilots, air-traffic controllers, employees of NASA and Boeing, and Baylor University's School of Aviation Sciences. As a result, we have in-depth knowledge of the issues, bringing strong factual evidence to the table.

We oppose H.R. 2107, End Gridlock at Our Nations' Critical Airports Act of 2001, as it will take critical authority away from state, local, and political authorities. It also will inflict material harm to the health, safety, and welfare of citizens and will deprive them of well-established rights

My intent is not to scare anyone with the alarming public-health and environmental problems that are associated with airports and aircraft. I simply want to present you with the facts from the studies, many of which are now posted on our website (www.us-caw) for public viewing.

Our health and that of our children must be protected from both current and future airport and aircraft operations. These operations generate staggering amounts and various types of toxic air, noise, ground, and water pollution. The aviation

industry is largely unregulated, and the meager regulations that do exist are enforced only loosely.

In addition to the significant impacts that aircraft have on our upper atmosphere, the emissions from airports and aircraft operations pose a major health threat. They have been linked to cancer, asthma, brain tumors, emphysema, heart disease, leukemia, Hodgkin's disease, kidney damage, and numerous other conditions. Evidence shows emissions from airports and aircraft operations expose an extremely large number of people living and working at distances greater than 20 miles from a facility. A study commissioned by four Chicago-area communities found that O'Hare International Airport emitted over 200 air toxins and that it presented unacceptable cancer risks to people living and working within 32 miles of the airport. Yet, shockingly, 70% of our nation's population resides within 20 miles of a major airport.

Likewise, other studies from around the world, from many different sources, including states, countries, school districts, airport workers and communities, all show that airport and aircraft-generated pollution are potentially lethal to people who live and work even many miles from airports.

The aviation industry tries to downplay the adverse impacts of airport and aircraft operations. However, O'Hare's own data show that it is the top hazardous and toxic polluter in the entire state of Illinois. New York's Kennedy and La Guardia airports are New York's number-1 and 2 polluters, respectively. London's Heathrow Airport (BAA) admitted that it generates over half of most major pollutants in the surrounding area, which includes London (1994 data). Similarly, the same can be said for Frankfurt, Zurich and others. We can only deduce that the problems are much worse than the federal government or the air-transport industry admits to.

When air-transport officials discuss pollution, they group many pollutants together in an attempt to minimize the problem. The industry claims that they are responsible for a small percentage of the total emissions perhaps 2-4%. If correct, it is still a staggering amount in itself, considering that there are only thousands of commercial aircraft; however, there are many other important factors to consider: First, it is not necessarily the amounts of pollution but the specific types of toxics and their particulate size. Second, one must consider the fact that about 90% of the toxic and criteria air pollutants are emitted at or near the airport. Also, a large percentage of jet emissions are still unidentified (unknown). Finally, there are many other factors that one must consider such as the synergistic (toxic cocktail effect), atmospheric, solar, decomposing, combustion and other trigger effects. It is those elements and others that make airport and aircraft pollution one of the worst environmental problems we face today.

According to the American Cancer Society, men have a one-in-two chance of being diagnosed with cancer during their lifetime; for women, the rate is one in three. A study commissioned by the Los Angeles School District, which is in proximity to Santa Monica Airport, where there are only 205,000 flights per year, revealed that the cancer risk for maximally exposed individuals was 13 to 26 per million; the so-called acceptable risk criterion is only 1 per million. Cancer is the second leading cause of death in the United States, exceeded only by heart disease—and we haven't even begun to investigate the potential link between heart problems and airport operations.

Simply put, aviation impacts pose a hidden public health issue affecting vast segments of the population.

For technical reasons, emissions from aviation operations are different than those from other sources and their risk threshold is much lower. The Los Angeles School District study found that flight volumes of only about fifteen jets per day were associated with a significant increased cancer rate among residents living under the flight paths. Also, the effects of many airport and aircraft pollutants are persistent and bio-accumulative—the toxins build up in our bodies and our environment, triggering health and environmental problems later on.

Despite this compelling evidence, the aviation industry is aggressively promoting bills that will erode environmental protections, take away local control, grant airports environmental immunity, and limit or kill court challenges brought by residents, the intent of these bills is clear: they are aimed at silencing citizens and communities who protest the expansion of airports in an effort to protect their families and neighborhoods.

Adding new runways will not relieve the vast majority of the delays that the flying public is experiencing. The real rationale for new construction is to accommodate the massive increases in flights that the FAA seeks to promote.

According to internal FAA and NASA documents, flights are predicted to at least double nationally by 2010, in large part because of cargo expansion. MSNBC recently reported, "...many airports have already exceeded projections for 2010." Aviation is the key to economic globalization, and well over 2000 airports in the United States are either under expansion or are earmarked for it.

We are already well past acceptable levels of environmental and quality-of-life problems that airports and aircraft operations create. What we now have is a public-health threat of pandemic proportions. Regrettably, technological answers to mitigate the significant public health and environmental problems are decades away. The public deserves to know the true dimensions of the problem, so that it can participate in informed decisions about adding more flights.

There are better alternatives than those offered by airport expansion. In order to immediately reduce delays, we must bring flight volumes to safer and healthier levels by enforcing the high-density rule. We also need to start allotting more than a miniscule fraction of the national budget to the development of high-speed rail, so that we can achieve a world-class system similar to that in Europe, where approximately 25% of the budget is used for this purpose. In addition, we should build new airports that are sufficiently removed from high-density population centers. And we must extend the application of demand-management strategies with proven effectiveness, such as gateholding, giving slot preference to the newest technology producing the cleanest and quietest aircraft and, also, other methods such as peak-period pricing. Finally, we should make greater use of innovative options such as video teleconferencing, which will reduce the need for some proportion of business travel.

We concur with the comments of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency regarding the proposed expansion of Boston's Logan Airport: enough is enough, clean up the environmental and public-health mess that exists already, route planes to well-buffered and strictly zoned areas, and make a meaningful investment in other modes of mass transit such as a high-speed rail.

In closing: H.R. 2701 strips states and local government of their ability to protect citizens with use of environmental standards, and it surrenders these important decisions to the air-transport industry. The aviation industry has made it manifestly clear that our welfare and that of our children are not on its radar screen. We look to the federal government to protect us, not to collude with special corporate interests. There are fundamental principles of democracy at stake here. We ask that you do the right thing and defeat this undemocratic bill, which would have environmentally devastating, irreversible consequences.

Thank you.