

We Oppose H.R. 2107 & S. 1290

Dear Senator/ Representative:

We are writing to alert you to H.R. 2107 (and its Senate companion bill S. 1290) “End Gridlock at Our Nation’s Critical Airports Act of 2001,” a bill currently in Congress that we feel is dangerous, reckless, and misguided. We are outraged that this bill, disguised to address airport congestion at a few airports, is in reality a measure that would significantly injure the health, safety, and welfare of the approximately one hundred and eighty million children and adults, and their environments, who live and work within twenty miles or more of all major airports in this country.

The true nature of this bill is to preempt the states’ authority to govern all airport construction and expansion (for those states that have airports with at least .25 percent of the total annual boardings). Should this bill become law, state governors would lose their authority to formally evaluate, alter, or stop any airport expansion. Thus, this bill could lead to an unrestricted explosion of airport expansion. This bill would also likely cause economic hardship to states and local governments onto which are forced airport expansions, in the costs to state and local taxpayers for subsidizing the necessary increase in surrounding infrastructure.

When Governor Ryan of Illinois gave testimony to the House Aviation subcommittee on August 1, 2001, he stated that “... H.R. 2107 would create a huge and dangerous canyon in the principle that each state has control over its sovereign territory and is free from undue federal interference in the use of its land.” John Eagerton IV, NASAO Chairman and Alabama Aeronautics Bureau Chief, also testified, stating “...[w]e, however, are concerned about the scope of this legislation, the precedent it sets, and the fact that it will usurp many carefully considered state statutes, and we wonder what some of its unintended consequences may be in coming years.” Eagerton also confirmed that “[t]he vast majority of the states we talked to in our research for this hearing opposed this legislation, even those which would not be directly effected by H.R. 2107.”

This bill would also prevent citizens from taking legal action to oppose unwarranted airport expansion. People’s concerns regarding large amounts of additional air, noise, water, and ground pollution from airport and aircraft operations, added traffic congestion or questions regarding how airport expansions might negatively impact their health, their children’s health, their quality of life, and their property values, could not be taken into account. Some states, including New York, California, Massachusetts, and Minnesota, have their own “little NEPA’s,” or required evaluations of the environmental impacts of large development projects, with required mitigation of significant environmental impacts. This bill would nullify those states’ ability to apply and enforce those environmental standards for airport construction. The anti-democratic nature of this bill in taking away citizen’s rights is dangerous, contrary to the public interest, and the very antithesis of the democratic process.

That unfettered airport expansions would also make it more difficult for metropolitan areas with serious air pollution problems to come into compliance with the national Clean Air Act ambient

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air quality standards is yet another problem ignored by the authors of this legislation. Ambient air quality is directly related to people's health and welfare, with a proven direct correlation between pollution from airports and airplanes and serious health problems. Jack Saporito, President of US Citizens' Aviation Watch stated regarding this bill "... in the United States over 70% of the residents' health could be directly affected by airport and aircraft operations, and H.R. 2107 strips states and local governments of their ability to protect citizens with use of environmental standards, and it surrenders these important decisions to the air-transport industry." This bill is an outrageous and blatant attempt by the aviation industry to weaken what few health requirements are in place to control the pollution it causes.

The aviation industry claims that by building more runways they will alleviate air traffic congestion. We disagree. With flights predicted to double in the next ten years if left uncontrolled, runways will mean more planes taking off and landing more often. This will cause more congestion, not alleviate it, thereby decreasing aviation safety and increasing the amount of deadly chemical-containing jet emissions. There are better solutions to airport congestion problems than expansion of airports such as building a nationwide, world-class high-speed rail system, extending the application of demand-management strategies, and making greater use of innovative options such as video teleconferencing to reduce the need for business travel.

This bill is unacceptable, and we hope that you will conclude the same. The right to question or oppose any project which would jeopardize people's health, safety, environment, quality of life or that of their children must be protected. We strongly urge you to oppose H.R. 2107 & S. 1290 and join the fight to protect your state's, and all states' duty to protect the health, safety, welfare, and environment of their citizenry.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

The Honorable Henry J. Hyde, U.S. House of Representatives
The Honorable Senate President James "Pate" Philip, Illinois Senate
Staci-lee Sherwood, Environmental lobbyist

Airport Neighbors Alliance, Inc., Albuquerque, New Mexico
Airport Neighbors United, Birmingham, Alabama
Alliance of Residents Concerning O'Hare, Inc., Arlington Heights, Illinois
California Association of Realtors, San Diego Association of Realtors
Citizens Against Airport Pollution, A League of Neighborhoods, San Jose, California
Citizens Against SEA-TAC Expansion, Washington state
Citizens for Airport Safety and Environment, Mt. Prospect, Illinois
City of Olmsted Falls, Ohio
DC-Citizens for the Abatement of Aircraft Noise, Washington, D.C.

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Department of Chemistry & Biochemistry, New York City College, CUNY
Earth Island Journal, Gar Smith

East Haven/New Haven Committee for the Protection of Property Rights, Connecticut
Elk Grove Village, Illinois
Friends of the Earth
Hawthorne Civic Association in DeKalb County, Georgia
Helicopter Noise Coalition of New York City
International Resources Center for Chemically Induced Disorders
Jackson County Citizens League, Oregon
Londonderry Citizens Aviation Watch, New Hampshire
Massachusetts Audubon Society
Metropolitan New York Aircraft Noise Mitigation Committee for the states of New York, Connecticut
and New Jersey
Mothers Against Airport Pollution
Natural Resources Defense Council
New Jersey Coalition Against Aircraft Noise
Oregon Environmental Council
PDK Watch, Atlanta, Georgia
Piedmont Quality of Life Coalition, North Carolina
Preserve Unique Magnolia Association, Nederland, Colorado
Ramonans for Sensible Growth, Ramona, California
Renewable Aviation Fuels Development Center, Baylor University
Safeguarding the Historic Hanscom Area's Irreplaceable Resources, Concord, Massachusetts
Sane Aviation for Everyone, New York, New York
Save San Francisco Bay Association (Save The Bay)
Scenic America
Sierra Club Challenge to Sprawl Campaign
Sierra Club, Atlantic Chapter
Sierra Club, Lower Mid-Hudson
Sierra Club, Massachusetts
Sierra Club, Westchester County, New York
South Metro Airport Action Council, Minneapolis, Minnesota
Stop Airport Noise and Expansion, Tipp City, Ohio
Surface Transportation Policy Project
Tri-State Transportation Campaign (NY/NJ/CT)
US-Citizens Aviation Watch Association, Inc.
Village of Harwood Heights, Illinois
Village of Roselle, Illinois
Waterkeeper Alliance
Witham Airport Action Majority, Stuart, Florida