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Congress of the United States
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Washington, DC 20515–0530

HENRY A. WAXMAN
30th District, California

August 26, 2003

Administrator Marion C. Blakely
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20591

Re: FAA Docket No. FAA-2003-15495
Proposed Policy On Weight-Based Airport Regulations

Dear Administrator Blakely:

I am writing to express my strong opposition to proposed rule FAA-2003-15495, which would have serious consequences for my constituents living in the neighborhoods surrounding Santa Monica Airport (SMO). I am alarmed that this rule would compromise safety at the airport and introduce flight traffic by large business jets, without any safety evaluations, community hearings, or an environmental review.

As you know, the Santa Monica Airport has a unique layout. The airport's one 5,000 foot runway was built decades ago with no runway safety area. Approximately 75% of the airport is surrounded by residences, with some homes located as close as 250 feet from the runway. Both ends of the runway are lined with houses, buffered only by abrupt hill slopes and public streets.

There has been growing concern in the community about safety conditions at the airport, particularly with regard to the increasing number of business jets using the facility. Implementation of FAA-2003-15495 would exacerbate these problems by requiring the airport operator to admit planes up to twice the normal weight bearing capacity and eviscerating the non-discriminatory weight-based restrictions calculated to determine safe runway use.

Even on an occasional basis it is too dangerous for such large jets to be using SMO. The runway is not strong enough or long enough and the limited airport tarmac and servicing facilities cannot withstand the capacity or scale of such operations. I am also concerned that the rule would be entirely unmanageable and unenforceable by air traffic controllers who would have no effective way to systematically administer the proposed exceptions.

In addition, I am deeply disappointed that the FAA did not conduct a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) assessment of this rule. Over the past years, I have received numerous complaints from residents about noise, vibrations, fumes, and black soot, all of which would become much worse with air traffic by larger jets. I therefore ask that a thorough environmental and community review of the impact on SMO be completed before FAA-2003-15495 is considered for implementation at the airport.

Thank you for your consideration of my concerns. I appreciate the opportunity to continue working with you to make sure that SMO operations are safe, secure, and environmentally sustainable for the airport and the surrounding community. I look forward to your response.

With kind regards, I am

Sincerely,

HENRY A. WAXMAN
Member of Congress