

**U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
Subcommittee on Aviation
Regarding National Aviation Capacity Expansion Act (H.R. 3479)
Statement of Jack Saporito for the Alliance of Residents Concerning O'Hare, and
US-Citizens Aviation Watch Association
P. O. Box 1702
Arlington Heights, IL 60006-1702
(847) 506-0670**

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Locally, the Alliance of Residents Concerning O'Hare (AReCO) represents members in 41 communities, including Chicago, that are affected by O'Hare Airport operations.

Nationally, US-Citizens Aviation Watch Association is the leading public-advocacy group focusing on aviation issues, representing various municipalities and organizations; it speaks for about 1.5 million individuals in the United States. Internationally, the Association is also a non-governmental organization, representing member and associate organizations in 27 countries. Its mission is "Protecting the public's health, environment, and property; promoting safety; and advocating a sustainable, equitable and accountable aviation industry."

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

First, one must ask the question, "How could putting in more runways and hundreds of thousands of more flights into O'Hare relieve congestion?"

According to the Government Accounting Office¹, building more runways is not the answer to O'Hare congestion, as they would be overcrowded before they were finished, and there are questions as to whether the bill's mandated runway design would cause more weather delays, as the airport is situated in the northern climate zone.

We oppose the expansion of Chicago's O'Hare Airport and H.R. 3479 for the many following reasons, among them, because this bill sets a horrible precedent for all airports and communities in our nation. According to the Government Accounting Office, over 2,000 airports in the United States are either planning or already expanding² to handle the predicted massive increase in flights. You cannot just steamroll the rights of the American people!

¹ GAO. *National Airspace System: Long-Term Capacity Planning Needed Despite Recent Reduction in Flight Delays*. GAO-02-185. Dec. 2001.

² GAO. *General Aviation Airports: Unauthorized Land Use Need Highlights Need for Improved Oversight and Enforcement*. GAO/RCED-99-109, May 1999.

Airports rank among the top ten industrial emission sources, and yet they are virtually unregulated. We are concerned about serious public health, environment, noise, and other quality of life problems that are related to air transport operations and the limited protections for them that this bill will strip away.

Our organizations have a vital interest in assuring that any modifications of the airport comply with all existing laws and regulations. This bill, through various “tricks,” removes the meager environmental laws and regulations and fair legal venues that are designed in our “checks and balances system” to protect our citizens’ health, safety, environment, welfare and other quality of life issues. We oppose this bill and any attempt to force any more flights, in addition to the almost one-million flights a year that Chicago O’Hare International Airport now has, especially since there are better options for the communities and air travelers.

Along with noise, airport and aircraft operations produce massive and unusual types of air, water, and ground pollution...all of which is serious and deadly. As a result, we already have a significant public health problem that is epidemic in nature, affecting a large percentage of the population that live even many miles away from the airport, including those living in the flight tracks of this mega-airport that has already about three times the number of flights than most other major airports.

According to O’Hare’s own data, it already produces more than 18% of known carcinogens³ in Cook County (pop. 5.4 million); Cook is the second largest producer in the nation. That is enormous! It should come as no surprise; we already suffer from some of the highest cancer and respiratory rates in the nation.

O’Hare is located in an area of dense development. At least several hundreds of thousands of Chicago-area residents oppose O’Hare expansion. Many others, including policy makers, are being fooled by the heavy lobbying and marketing of this ill-conceived scheme.

Letters from and newspaper articles about Craig Burzych, President of National Air Traffic Controllers Association at O’Hare, state the expansion plan is unsafe. Obviously, as a professional, he is profoundly aware of the imposition on flight safety by the proposed doubling of aircraft operations and the resulting communication congestion in both the approach to the O’Hare airspace and approach and landings at the airport. The plan is unsafe in an already congested airspace around O’Hare and would add to the fear of the controllers of impending disaster. Other experts too, have voiced their concern.

The O’Hare expansion plan places money and backroom deals above our health and that of our children’s health and future. The politically connected, pushing O’Hare expansion, are acutely aware of the damage it does and that is why they have introduced federal bills that will take away the meager protections that do exist.

³ Industrial carcinogens

Constructing new runways or reconfiguring the existing O'Hare (basically building a new airport) will significantly harm communities, including neighborhoods, schools, businesses and homes, because of the airport and aircraft's extraordinary amounts and types of noise, water, ground and toxic air pollution, property takings, tax base losses and other quality of life issues. These problems should be reduced or eliminated, not unacceptably increased as this expansion bill does, especially since there are better alternatives.

AReCO and US-CAWA believe that exposing babies and young children to excessive noise and toxic air pollution and the other significant health and quality of life problems that O'Hare Airport and its aircraft already causes is a form of child abuse. Adding to that is despicable.

Now we hear officials denying that these expansion bills take away our protections, even though much of it is written in black and white. Not surprisingly, other "tricks" are hidden in case law⁴ and the legalese of the bill.

This bill that would set O'Hare expansion into federal law would take away the right of the people to self govern, pulling away local controls. They undermine the state-federal balance of power regarding airports and other land-use and environmental issues

The only two real public health and environmental protections that would apply to the planned O'Hare expansion project would be effectively taken away -- the Clean Air Act conformity requirements and the National Environmental Policy Act's environmental impact evaluation and mitigation process. This bill would also drastically limit the people's right to bring suit against this misguided expansion, by removing all causes of action, except for the Federal Aviation Administration's narrow, limited administrative process.

Further, this bill would give the Federal Aviation Administration almost total control over the environmental protection process, forcing the Army Corp of Engineers to shortcut its wetland permitting process. It prohibits the Environmental Protection Agency from determining and publishing findings as to whether expanding O'Hare would be unsatisfactory from the standpoint of public health, welfare or environmental quality.

Even the jobs that back roomers are using to try to bribe the public are little more than hot air. The questionable Booze-Allen report that the Chicago Chamber of Commerce promotes, paid for by United Airlines and other expansionists, shows a couple of hundred thousands jobs that would be created, about the same that the state of Illinois projects for a new south suburban airport; yet, even if correct, they do not say that they would be mainly temporary jobs. Any reasonable person understands that we already have a mega-airport; how many more jobs could be added by just one more runway, versus building another brand new airport? No matter what lip service this bill pays to building a reliever

⁴ *City of New York, et al. vs. Mineta, et al.* (docket #00-4124)

airport for O'Hare, an airport that will provide more capacity than O'Hare, the proposed mammoth O'Hare expansion would eliminate the need for the reliever.

Oppose O'Hare expansion! Instead, support the reasonable alternatives that this bill would take away. These include operational and management controls; and also, sending unnecessary flights to other airports such as Wayports, "Highways in the Skies". That would make room for the desired, new international flights that will result from the economic globalization treaties, which will create meaningful jobs. And for the long-term, provide that our country and our region build a world-class high-speed rail system that will complement commercial air transport to achieve a balanced and sustainable intermodal transportation system that will benefit all of us.

Protect our children from airport child abuse, protect our communities, safeguard our lives and future – defeat the O'Hare expansion plan and support better alternatives.

Thank you.

(For more information and studies see: www.us-caw.org and www.areco.org)