

# US-Citizens Aviation Watch Association

a not-for-profit corporation

*"Protecting the public's health, environment, property and promoting safety."*

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March 15, 2001

The Honorable George W. Bush, President  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Sir:

US-Citizens Aviation Watch Association, a nationwide alliance of health, environmental, and civic organizations and municipalities representing approximately 1.5 million members, urges you to oppose any legislation that attempts to weaken court challenges or the environmental-impact study process in regard to all airport and runway projects. We also ask that you declare an emergency moratorium on all airport expansion projects until such time as comprehensive, objective health and environmental studies pertaining to the adverse effects of aviation have been completed. We request that you to take these actions for the following reasons.

- Existing environmental and public health safeguards for aviation are inadequate.
- Aviation traffic is increasing dramatically, with little or no regard to public-health and environmental impacts, upper-atmospheric damage, the protection of natural quiet in our national parks, or other quality-of-life issues.
- Aviation is an enormous *unchecked* polluting industry. Airports and aircraft operations release vast quantities of toxic particulates, carcinogens, and other potentially lethal pollutants into the air, water, and ground. Because this occurs next to many major population centers, it poses a serious risk to the health of more than 70% of our nation's population.

*Advocating a sustainable, equitable and accountable aviation industry.*

- As much as 10% of the nation's waters are already contaminated or in danger of being contaminated. The vast majority of municipal water supplies rely, at least in part, on groundwater-derived sources. Uncontrolled releases of jet fuel and deicing and anti-icing chemicals are infiltrating groundwater and streams, killing the natural biota and fish. It is also thought to be contaminating aquifers located under or near many of the nation's airports. Once these underground resources are contaminated, they are lost forever.
- Greater than 180 million Americans could be affected by aviation-related pollution. Recent studies have identified serious health problems for people living and working many miles away from airports, and the Environmental Protection Agency predicts that aviation-related pollution will substantially increase within the next decade.
- Documentation shows that people living near airports have a higher cancer risk. The data indicate that these individuals have higher rates of brain, esophageal, laryngeal, and lung cancer; much higher rates of asthma, pregnancy complications, heart disease, and other aviation-pollution related illnesses; and a shorter life expectancy, similar to that of third-world countries.
- Over 10 million American schoolchildren's cognitive development, motivation, and education are being damaged by the constant bombardment of unacceptable levels of aviation noise at homes and schools located in proximity to airports. These same children also are being put in harm's way by uncontrolled (and unreported) hazardous and toxic air and water pollution released from aviation operations. The long-term damage that our nation's children are being subjected to is both unacceptable and alarming.
- A report from the General Accounting Office, entitled Aviation and the Environment (February 2000), shows that high-altitude emissions from aircraft have substantial effects on global warming and need further study. Referring to climate change caused by jet contrails' radiation effects, Patrick Minnis, a National Aeronautics and Space Administration researcher, stated: "The number of clear days over the U.S. has decreased in the last 30 years, and we suspect that much of that is due to an increase in cirrus clouds, which we suspect is probably due to an increase in air traffic."

There are alternatives to expanding aviation. Teleconferencing, world-class high-speed rail, and other modes of mass transportation are but a few. Aviation is the most polluting form of transportation and is an inefficient use of fossil fuel for regional travel. As airport delays continue to grow, the aviation industry looks to the government and to taxpayers to support new

construction and expansion, as if that is "the answer." We believe that this approach is dangerous and shortsighted.

The unprecedented levels of delay that are occurring at major U.S. airports were predicted in a 1995 Department of Transportation report entitled "A Study of the High-Density Rule." The study stated that, if the so-called slot rule were relaxed, system-wide delays would follow. The slot rule was instituted in 1969 at four of the nation's busiest airports -- O'Hare, JFK International, LaGuardia, and Reagan National -- to help relieve delay and congestion. Since 1995, exceptions to the slot rule have been made, resulting in increased delays. Last year's passage of the aviation industry-sponsored bill AIR-21 (Wendell H. Ford Aviation Investment and Reform Act for the 21st Century) has led to overscheduling, which has worsened the delay problem. Flights also are delayed for other reasons, including labor and maintenance problems, adverse weather, and equipment malfunction. None of these factors, which account for the vast majority of delays, would be addressed by new-runway construction.

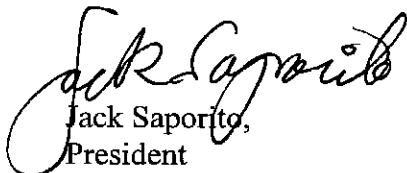
The Federal Aviation Administration claims that only 500,000 Americans are adversely affected by aircraft noise. Yet actual noise monitoring by communities around Chicago's O'Hare Airport indicates that more than 1.6 million residents could be adversely affected by this one airport *alone*.

It is well known that airport and aircraft operations are major sources of pollution and environmental justice requires that one group of people not benefit at the cost of environmental degradation affecting the quality of life of another group.

President Bush, for the health and well-being of our citizenry -- for the sustainability and survival of the planet and all of its inhabitants -- we urge you to take a far-reaching, visionary approach. It is tempting to do what is easiest, especially when that would mollify a small (albeit vocal and disproportionately powerful) segment of the public and the business sector -- but that doesn't make such a course the best or the wisest one.

We would be pleased and honored to send representatives of our organization to meet with you and your staff in order to discuss the important matters raised herein.

Respectfully,



Jack Saporito,  
President

c: Andrew H. Card, Chief of Staff, Office of the President  
Nick Calio, Chief of Legislative Affairs, Office of the President  
Rich Juliano, Office of Norman Mineta, Secretary of Transportation