

Rep. Kathleen Rice
Talking Points – Natural Resources Committee Hearing on the Long Island
Aviation History Act
Wednesday, May 22nd—10:30 am

- Thank you Chairman Grijalva and Ranking Member Bishop for inviting me to speak today on the Long Island Aviation History Act.
- For over a century, Long Island has played a major role in the development of our nation’s aviation industry, helping it grow from an obscure sport into the booming industry and critical national resource that it is today.
- My bill would authorize the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study of the possible ways in which the department could commemorate Long Island’s aviation history.
- Among other things, this bill identifies five specific areas across Long Island that should be considered as units of the National Park Service: the Hempstead Plains, Suffolk County Air Force Base, the hamlet of Bethpage, the hamlet of Port Washington, and the village of Farmingdale.
- 92 years ago, last Monday, Charles Lindbergh took off from Roosevelt Field, a part of the Hempstead Plains, to begin the world’s first solo, nonstop, trans-Atlantic flight aboard the Spirit of St. Louis. And by the 1930s, Roosevelt Field was the busiest American civilian airfield.

- Next to Roosevelt Field was Mitchel Air Force Base, the original location of the U.S. Air Defense Command. During World War II, Mitchel Field was the main point of air defense for New York City, equipped with fighter planes to help repel a potential German invasion.
- The Republic Aviation Corporation in Farmingdale built the P-47 Thunderbolt fighter, the most produced World War II fighter plane, which was used in every theater of the war.
- Once known as the ‘Plymouth Rock’ of American aviation, Port Washington was the home of Pan American World Airways’ trans-Atlantic hub from 1934 to 1940.
- And during the Cold War, Suffolk County Air Force Base was responsible for monitoring Soviet planes and intercepting potential attacks on the New York metropolitan area.
- And last but not least, America’s victory in the space race started in Bethpage, where the Grumman Aircraft Company built the Lunar Module as part of the Apollo Program.
- Ultimately, it was the expertise of Long Island’s aviation industry that brought Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin to the moon.
- In addition to evaluating the significance of these historic sites, this bill would also direct the Secretary of the Interior to explore ways to enhance historical research, education, and public awareness of Long Island’s aviation history. It’s crucial that we

always remember it – not only to honor the efforts of those who came before us, but to inspire us to follow their lead and keep working to ensure that Long Island remains a center of innovation and ingenuity.

- I would like to thank all of my colleagues from the Long Island delegation who are original cosponsors of this legislation, and I would also like to thank my predecessor, Congresswoman Carolyn McCarthy, who first introduced this bill in 2012.