

FAA Reauthorization Testimony

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Increases in air traffic and adjustments to flight paths are causing serious injury to the quality of life in neighborhoods throughout my own district in the San Fernando Valley, and in many other areas around the country.

Residents have extensively documented and reported new and substantial impacts to our community from the noise and pollution issuing from the increasingly congested airspace overhead.

There have been several public forums, multiple bills introduced in Congress, a GAO audit of the FAA, and a lawsuit filed by the City of Los Angeles.

The FAA knows about the problem, but it has failed to act.

It is time for the FAA to take the health and safety concerns of people on the ground seriously and to take immediate action to address them.

Nationally, and especially in my district, performance-based navigation systems have led to the creation of more precise flight patterns, resulting in concentration of noise and associated pollution over smaller areas. This is no small thing. Concentration of noise leads to a non-stop aviation noise bombardment of particular neighborhoods, a hostile takeover of quality of life, including sleepless nights and the inability to hold conversations in one's own home.

Despite efforts to gaslight my constituents, and to suggest that there are no real noise impacts and certainly not unannounced changes to paths, the FAA has formally acknowledged what has been called a "southern shift" in one particular flight path over my district, introducing thousands of constituents to not just new noise, but hyper-concentrated new noise.

We must provide local airports with the ability to disperse both arrivals and departures if they have proposals that can be implemented safely. And if the FAA wants to reject such proposals, then they should have to substantiate such decisions.

So, we should expand Section 175 of the *FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018*, to require the FAA to consider the feasibility of dispersal headings submitted for consideration by airport operators.

In my advocacy on behalf of constituents seeking relief from new and unyielding aviation noise and health impacts, I have been consistently told by the FAA to accept the status quo because the airspace over my constituent's homes is simply too complex to alter flight paths. Indeed, my constituents and I live in a large metropolitan area with air traffic headed to and from three sizable airports: LAX, Hollywood-Burbank and Van Nuys.

If a challenge to reducing noise is rooted in deconflicting the airspace, then we simply must hire many more air traffic controllers, particularly to staff Terminal Radar Approach Control Facilities, also known as TRACON.¹ Hiring additional controllers is not just about noise. Air traffic control, of course, is essential to safety, especially over complex airspace. The FAA must hire more air traffic controllers to deconflict airspace *and* safeguard our skies and the ground below.

In recent years, and thanks to a GAO audit, more attention has been drawn to faulty noise metrics used by the FAA to justify decisions, including the use of day-night average sound level, DNL, which, and I quote the GAO, “does not provide a clear picture of flight activity or associated noise levels at a given location.” In the 116th Congress, I supported Rep. Meng's bill, the *Decrease Noise Levels Act*, which would have directed the FAA to revise its use of noise metrics.² I support that bill today and look forward to working with Congresswoman Meng to reintroduce it.

Too often, the FAA fails to conduct an Environmental Assessment of new procedures, citing “CATEX”—the ability to “categorically exclude” certain procedures from analysis. The FAA should be required to conduct an Environmental Assessment for all new procedures. We've learned the hard way, that a cursory environmental review locks in impacts that can be far more impactful than constituents are led to believe. The FAA can't be allowed to operate on autopilot when it comes to new procedures.

¹ “The fiscal 2023 omnibus funded the hiring of 1,500 new air traffic controllers and the president is seeking appropriations to hire another 1,800 next year.”

[FAA is Facing a Looming Staffing Crisis as Post-Pandemic Needs Grow - Government Executive \(govexec.com\)](#)

² “This bill directs the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to revise its regulations to decrease the threshold for the day-night average sound level that constitutes significant noise from 65 decibels to 60 decibels, and adjust relative ranges of day-night average sound level accordingly.”

Lastly, everyone deserves the opportunity of a good night's sleep and thus communities deserve the opportunity to establish enforceable nighttime curfews at local airports.

In the San Fernando Valley, we are having flights at all hours of the day and night. Not only do residents living beneath flight paths endure the house-shaking noise of air-traffic during the day, but they also suffer the jarring interruption of their sleep at night.

As a longtime advocate for mandatory nighttime curfews, I have twice introduced the standalone legislation the *Valley-Wide Noise Relief Act* together with Congressman Adam Schiff, which would allow for nighttime curfews specifically at Hollywood Burbank and Van Nuys airports.

In 2019 and again in 2021, I joined with colleagues to introduce the *Restore Everyone's Sleep Tonight Act (or REST Act)* [H.R. 5106; Speier]. This bill authorizes an airport to impose a curfew between the hours of 10 p.m. and 7 a.m. Unfortunately, this legislation never received a floor vote. We must restore local control to the community. I look forward to working with Congressman Schiff, and with members of the committee to reintroduce these bills.

So many of the issues I've described are rooted in the FAA's unwillingness to incorporate input from those affected by aviation noise and health impacts. Last year, I joined my colleagues on the Quiet Skies Caucus, in calling on the FAA to establish an advisory committee of 30 citizens who live in communities impacted by airport noise, commensurate to others the FAA considers "key external stakeholders," as part of the FAA Noise Policy Review.

Thank you.