

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
JANUARY 4, 1989

CONTACT: JERRY BURKOT
202-225-3452

RAHALL, LEADERSHIP FIGHT FOR ESSENTIAL AIR SERVICE

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- U.S. Rep. Nick Rahall (D-WV) and the leadership of the House Public Works and Transportation Committee have come out in opposition to any proposed cuts in the Essential Air Service program to several West Virginia airports.

In a letter to the Secretary of Transportation, Rahall and his colleagues urged the Secretary not to implement the cuts in this program as had been proposed. "One year ago Congress reauthorized and revised the E.A.S. program to ensure continued service to the small communities and rural areas of this nation," they wrote. "We were very disappointed to see your proposal that would eliminate air service to some 30 to 50 communities. It would have been better if your department had spent the time issuing the necessary rules and procedures to implement the new E.A.S. program rather than developing alternatives to cut the old one."

Rahall and his colleagues will soon begin a legislative effort to obtain the necessary funding to keep this program alive. "The E.A.S. program benefits airports in Beckley, Bluefield/Princeton, Clarksburg/Fairmont, Elkins, and Morgantown," Rahall pointed out. "Many West Virginians would be denied air service if this program was allowed to fall by the wayside as the Administration proposes."

Such cutbacks would further hamper efforts at development of the local economies. "Once air service in these communities is gone, it will be very difficult to get it back and redevelop the market," Rahall observed. "This would be a cruel blow to our economic development and diversification. Businesses looking to relocate would not give these West Virginia communities a second look if they were not accessible by air."

Rahall and his colleagues asked the Secretary not to take any action until the legislative process has had a chance to save this program.

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mc file
Committee on Public Works and Transportation

One Hundredth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Room 2165, Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

TELEPHONE: AREA CODE 202, 225-4472

January 3, 1989

Honorable Jim Burnley
Secretary of Transportation
400 Seventh Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Jim:

We are writing to strongly urge you not to implement the cuts in the Essential Air Service (EAS) Program that were proposed in Notice 88-18.

One year ago, Congress reauthorized and revised the EAS Program. The purpose of this action was to ensure continued air service to the small communities and rural areas of this nation and to correct existing shortcomings in the program that had caused service and passenger usage to deteriorate at some communities. We continue to believe that this revised EAS Program, if fully and faithfully implemented, will be beneficial to small communities and the national air transportation system.

Therefore, we were very disappointed to see your proposal that would eliminate air service at some 30 to 50 communities. It would have been better if your department had spent the time issuing the necessary rules and procedures to implement the new EAS Program rather than developing alternatives to cut the old one.

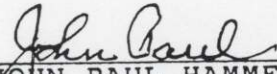
We of course, recognize that the current FY 1989 appropriation for EAS is below the level needed to sustain current service levels. But this is nothing new. In the past, when the CAB was responsible for the program, the initial appropriation was often insufficient to carry the program through the entire fiscal year. However, in each case, Congress eventually came through with a supplemental appropriation. We are confident that this year will be different. Indeed, there is some indication that the low EAS appropriation was due to a misunderstanding about the amount actually needed to maintain current EAS. This can easily be corrected by a \$6.6 million supplemental.


It is our intention to soon begin a legislative effort to obtain the necessary funding. But given the time it will take to organize the new Congress and begin the legislative process, there is no way that a supplemental appropriation can be passed before the March 1 deadline when the service cuts will take effect under your proposal.

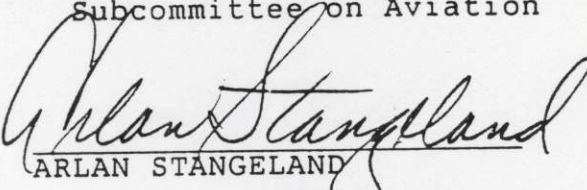
Therefore, it is absolutely essential that DOT not implement the proposed cuts and that it give the legislative process time to solve the problem. To do otherwise would be highly prejudicial to the 30 to 50 communities that would lose air service under your proposals. Once that air service is gone, it will be very difficult to get it back and redevelop the market. We believe the best approach is to maintain the service at current levels and await the supplemental, even though there is a risk of greater cuts later if the legislative effort fails.


In sum, we appreciate your decision to give the public a chance to comment on the future of the EAS Program but we ask that none of the proposed cutbacks be implemented until the legislative process has had a chance to solve the problem. Your close attention to this matter would be appreciated.

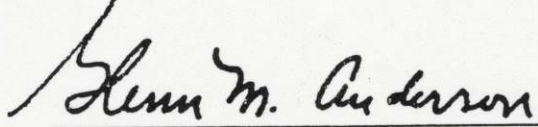
Sincerely,

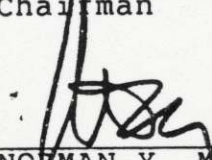

JOHN PAUL HAMMERSCHMIDT
Ranking Republican Member



NEWT GINGRICH
Ranking Republican Member,
Subcommittee on Aviation



ARLAN STANGELAND

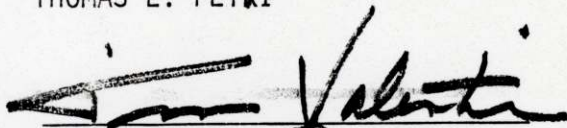

DON SUNDQUIST

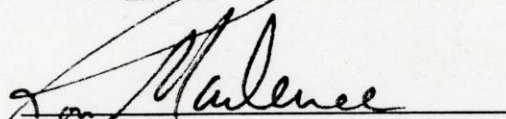

GLENN M. ANDERSON
Chairman

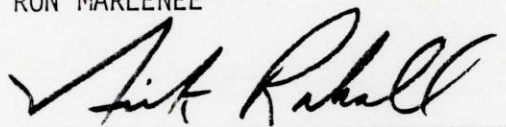

NORMAN Y. MINETA
Chairman, Subcommittee on
Aviation

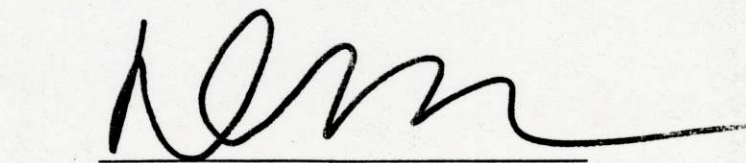

JAMES L. OBERSTAR
Chairman, Subcommittee on
Investigations and
Oversight

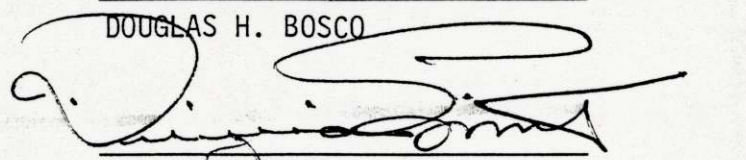

THOMAS E. PETRI

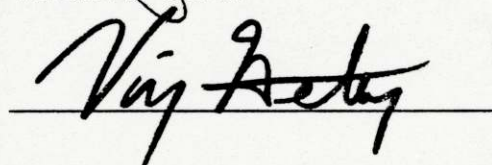

TIM VALENTINE


RON MARLENEE


ART RAHALL


DOUGLAS H. BOSCO


VIRGINIA SMITH


VIG AETAY

