

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 18, 2015

The Honorable Michael Huerta
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20591

Administrator Huerta:

As members of the House General Aviation Caucus, we want to express our deep concern with recent attempts by local governments to close or restrict access to small, non-hub airports that are a vital part of our National Airspace System (NAS). These airports act as important gateways for both commercial and non-commercial operators, including as relievers to nearby airports with significant commercial airline operations. It is incumbent on the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the federal government to enforce and defend their agreements with local governments, including Airport Improvement Program grant assurances and Surplus Property Act deeds. In doing so, the FAA will ensure these airports, which are important national assets, are accessible and properly maintained as intended.

In addition to the federal government and the FAA's general jurisdiction over the NAS, there are at least three specific reasons that operations at and access to these airports must be maintained.

First, in some cases airports were established by the federal government during a global conflict, such as World War II, to accommodate military assets used in defense of our nation and its allies. Many of the airports previously controlled and operated by the federal government, were turned over to a local authority to operate under the authority granted by the *Surplus Property Act*. However, under this scenario the local authority accepts ownership and operation of the airport with the explicit condition that it must be operated in perpetuity as part of the NAS.

Second, airports sign contracts with the FAA when they accept federal grant money under the Airport Improvement Program. These agreements, called "grant assurances," generally require airports to remain operational and accessible to all users, with specific guidelines outlined in the agreement, for a set period of time – ordinarily twenty years. The timelines of these agreements are extended when any additional money is accepted by the local authority or in some cases when the agreement is altered without additional federal funds being awarded.

Third, since these airports are a national asset, the FAA's revenue use policy requires local authorities to utilize any revenues generated on the airport for the purposes of operating and improving the facilities in support – an obligation which continues so long as the airport is in use, even if any of the other obligations have ended.

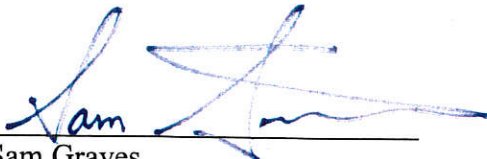
Administrator Huerta
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We understand that FAA recently finalized a decision on a Part 16 complaint regarding the Santa Monica Municipal Airport (SMO). We want to express our strong and unwavering support for FAA's position that the City must honor its grant obligations through 2023 consistent with prior FAA guidance. Further, to the extent that SMO accepted federal surplus property, the City has a responsibility and legal obligation to operate the facility as an airport in perpetuity.

In closing, given the situation at SMO and similar airports throughout the country, we want to make clear our support for the FAA's position in fighting back against illegal attempts to close airports in circumvention of the requirements of prior compacts between the federal government and local governing authorities, and generally-applicable laws and policies. The FAA must take all necessary steps to protect and maintain general aviation and commercial service airports in our aviation system, particularly airports that are critical to the national transportation system and helps air transportation contribute to a productive national economy and international competitiveness. These airports are a national asset and must be protected and maintained.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. Should you have any questions or require additional information please contact Jack Ruddy at 202-225-7041 or jack.ruddy@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,



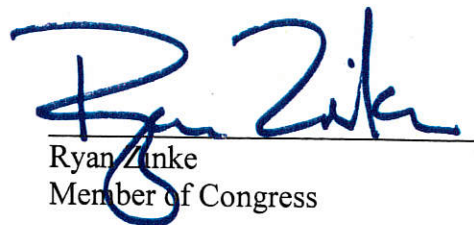
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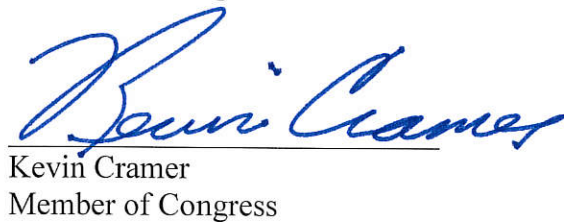
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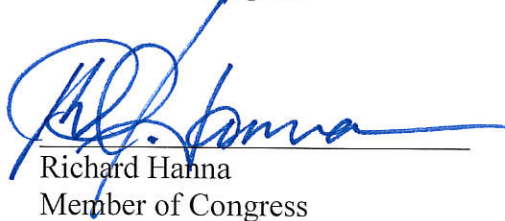
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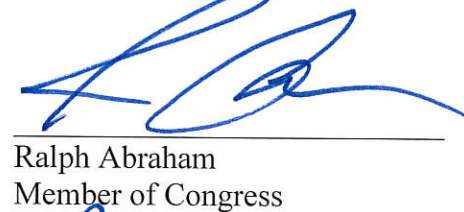
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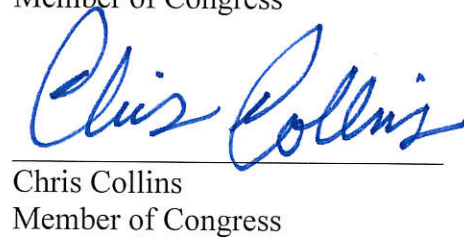
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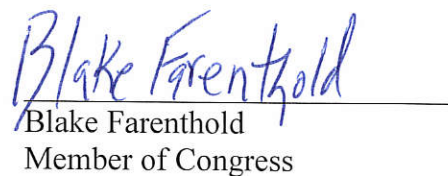
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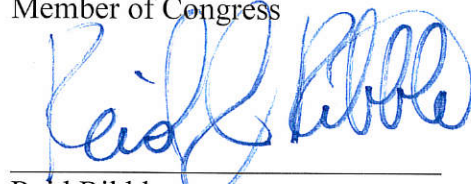
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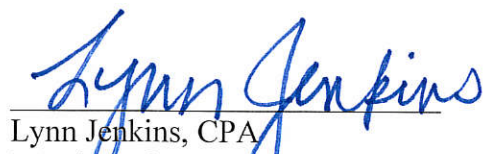
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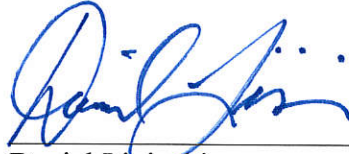
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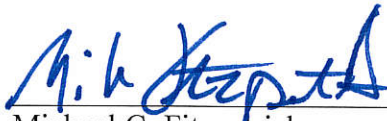
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