

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

April 5, 2017

The Honorable John Thune
Chairman
Committee on Commerce, Science and
Transportation
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Bill Shuster
Chairman
Committee on Transportation and
Infrastructure
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Bill Nelson
Ranking Member
Committee on Commerce, Science and
Transportation
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Peter A. DeFazio
Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation and
Infrastructure
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members:

As Congress begins consideration of a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reauthorization bill this year, we write to make clear our strong opposition to any attempts aimed at changing the current High Density (“Slot”) and Perimeter rules at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport.

Reagan National and Washington Dulles International Airports were designed by the federal government and operate on its behalf as an integrated system. Acknowledging the physical limitations and community impacts of aircraft noise at Reagan National, Congress mandated the Slot and Perimeter rules. Dulles International was planned as both the growth airport and international gateway for the region’s aviation needs. For over three decades, passenger volume at Dulles International grew while the Slot rule at Reagan National kept flight activity relatively stable.

Maintaining operational stability has also helped achieve balance with Thurgood Marshall Baltimore Washington International (BWI) so that the broader interests of the region are served. Our airports enable Maryland, the District of Columbia and Virginia to access the global economy in ways that create jobs and opportunities for the region. Part of the rationale for the relocation of major corporate headquarters such as SAIC, Hilton Hotels, Nestle USA and Volkswagen of America is the connectivity our regional aviation system provides.

However, as part of the last three FAA reauthorization bills (2000, 2003 and 2012), Congress has made changes to the Slot rule which disrupted the system’s balance. After six

consecutive years of growth, passenger enplanements at Reagan National overtook Dulles International in 2015 and 2016. Flight activity resulting from legislative loosening of the Slot and Perimeter rules, combined with airline mergers and commercial transactions, have led to significant congestion and stress on Reagan National's facilities and a decline in commercial domestic passenger volume at Dulles International. Since 2000, domestic commercial passenger traffic at Reagan National has grown 50 percent while Dulles International has declined by 9 percent. The decline at Dulles International is, in part, attributable to changes made by Congress to the operational rules at Reagan National.

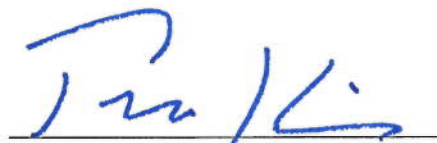
The impacts of additional modifications to existing law could financially destabilize Dulles International at a time when the airport is still recovering from previous slot and perimeter alterations and external economic factors. Investments made by the Airports Authority from 1990 to 2010 resulted in over \$4 billion in debt. Further complicating the repayment of this debt is the decrease in the number of airlines and passengers, the culmination of which makes Dulles International more expensive and thus less competitive. The State of Maryland has also made significant investments in BWI. History has shown that increasing slots, changing aircraft utilization or expanding the perimeter results in local and regional economic volatility, increased aircraft noise and anti-competitive practices.

No Member of Congress appreciates another representative meddling with the assets in their state or district. We, too, strongly oppose any attempts by other Members to dictate operations at these airports for their own personal convenience at great cost to our communities and constituents. We have seen in past debates that proposals to significantly change the Slot and Perimeter rules have threatened to derail the entire FAA reauthorization process. We would all be better served by avoiding repetition of this debate so that all Members may focus on this important reauthorization legislation. For these reasons, we look forward to working with you to pass an FAA reauthorization bill this year that leaves intact the current rules governing operations at Reagan National Airport.

Sincerely,



MARK R. WARNER
U.S. Senator



TIM KAINE
U.S. Senator



BENJAMIN L. CARDIN
U.S. Senator



CHRIS VAN HOLLEN
U.S. Senator



JOE MANCHIN III
U.S. Senator



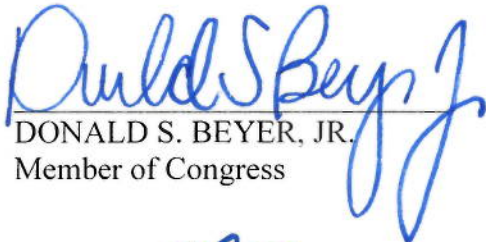
BARBARA COMSTOCK
Member of Congress



ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON
Member of Congress



GERALD E. CONNOLLY
Member of Congress



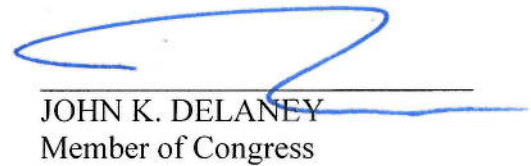
DONALD S. BEYER, JR.
Member of Congress



STENY H. HOYER
Member of Congress



ANTHONY G. BROWN
Member of Congress



JOHN K. DELANEY
Member of Congress



ROBERT J. WITTMAN
Member of Congress



A. DONALD MCEACHIN
Member of Congress



BOB GOODLATTE
Member of Congress