



Statement of Representative Henry A. Waxman
H.R. 915, FAA Reauthorization Act of 2009
May 21, 2009

Madame Speaker. I would like to thank the Chairman for accepting an amendment I have offered regarding the need for the FAA to take meaningful action to address safety concerns at Santa Monica Airport. I appreciate the Committee's ongoing interest in addressing this serious issue.

Santa Monica Airport is a unique General Aviation facility located in my congressional district. Built in 1922, the airport has no runway safety areas, which are now required by the FAA to reduce damage and loss of life in the event that an aircraft overshoots the runway or fails to lift off. The airport's single runway is bordered by steep hills, public streets, and densely populated neighborhoods, with homes as close as 250 feet from the runway. As flight traffic at the airport has increased, particularly among larger jets, so have concerns that any plane overshooting the runway would be at great risk of landing in the neighborhood.

For nearly a decade, I have joined the community, the City of Santa Monica and the Airport Administration to push the FAA to address this serious safety gap. While the FAA has had discussions with the City, its response has at times been marked by delay and unfortunate acts of bad faith. Its proposals have simply fallen short of addressing the safety needs of the airport. Some proposed changes could seriously undermine emergency response capability at the airport, while others would be insufficient to stop a larger jet from an overrun into the surrounding streets and homes.

My constituents and the crews and passengers that use Santa Monica Airport deserve to have the confidence that airport operations meet FAA safety guidelines and go beyond the barest minimum enhancements previously offered by the FAA. The amendment expresses the sense of Congress that the incoming Administrator of the FAA should take a fresh look at this issue. I urge the new Administrator, once confirmed, to swiftly enter into good faith discussions with the City of Santa Monica to achieve runway safety area solutions consistent with FAA design guidelines to address the safety concerns at Santa Monica Airport. When safety is at stake, time is always of the essence.