



April 16, 2015

The Honorable Barbara Comstock  
United States House of Representatives  
226 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Comstock:

On behalf of the Loudoun County Chamber of Commerce's Board of Directors and our more than 1,300 members, we respectfully ask for your support on several issues of great importance to Loudoun County that will greatly impact the future economic viability of Washington-Dulles International Airport.

Specifically, we urge you to strongly oppose any effort to add additional takeoff and landing slots at, and more beyond perimeter flights from, Reagan National in the 2015 Federal Aviation Authority (FAA) Reauthorization bill. We also ask you to support increasing the Passenger Facility Charge (PFC) and indexing it to inflation.

As you know, Washington-Dulles International is a critical economic engine for Loudoun County, supporting over 18,000 direct and indirect jobs and providing more than \$78 million in state and local taxes annually. However, the future of this airport is intrinsically linked to the future of Reagan National Airport as the two airports operate as a system with each airport performing a specialized function within this system. Reagan National's function is to serve as a short-haul origins and destinations airport with a limit on the number of takeoffs and landings per hour, the so-called "slot rule," and a restriction on the distance of non-stop flights, the so-called, "perimeter rule." Washington-Dulles International Airport's function, on the other hand, is to serve long-haul and international flights.

For over two decades, this arrangement, dictated by Congress, allowed passenger activity at Dulles International to grow steadily and activity at Reagan National to remain relatively stable at just over 15 million passengers. However, those trends are now reversing. In the three most recent FAA Reauthorization bills, Congress added more slots at Reagan, and allowed more flights to destinations outside the perimeter. As a result of these actions by Congress, as well as airline mergers and industry changes, Reagan National will overtake Washington-Dulles International in domestic enplanements this year.

This imbalance is disastrous for both airports. Not only are the estimated 22 million passengers annually straining Reagan National's physically constrained infrastructure, but each time airlines shift flights from Washington-Dulles to Reagan National, it makes Washington-Dulles less competitive. Maintaining a healthy balance within this two airport system is imperative for Loudoun County and Virginia's continued economic success.

As a member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, the Committee charged with oversight of the Federal Aviation Authority, you are uniquely placed to influence the provisions of 2015 FAA Reauthorization bill. To that end, the Loudoun County Chamber of Commerce urges you to oppose including in the bill any additional Reagan



National slots or changes in the perimeter rule. In addition, we urge you to share with your colleagues in Congress, many of whom regularly use these airports, the importance of maintaining a balanced airport system.

In addition, we urge you to support increasing the Passenger Facility Charge (PFC) and indexing it to inflation. Stabilizing the balance between Reagan National and Washington-Dulles is only half of the battle. In order to ensure our airport system's continued growth, it is critical that Congress modernize how airport improvements are financed.

The PFC is a locally collected user fee, set by the Airports Authority in collaboration with tenant airlines and approved by the federal government, subject to a cap. It is tied to specific airport improvement projects that increase efficiency, enhance safety or capacity, reduce noise, or increase competitiveness. The present PFC cap of \$4.50 was set by Congress fourteen years ago. Since then, its purchasing power has declined to \$2.45 due to the inflation of construction costs. Increasing the PFC cap and indexing the charge to inflation will give the traveling public more choices and lower fares by allowing local authorities to make improvements that will attract more airlines and service alternatives.

Each visitor to the national capital region spends \$3,300 per visit, and our airports must be able to facilitate their efficient arrival and departure in order to remain competitive and grow. Consider that the 2013 Infrastructure Report Card issued by the American Society of Civil Engineers, gave all of our nation's airports a "D" rating. And, according to Skytrax, the agency that ranks world airports, none of America's airports rank within the top 25 in the world. This is deplorable but more so for Reagan National and Washington-Dulles Airports as they serve as the first impression millions of national and international passengers have of our nation's capital region. We must put our collective best foot forward by modernizing our airports and closing the amenities gap. To do that, investment in our airports are vitally needed.

However, unless Congress is willing and able to allocate billions of dollars to the project, the PFC, at its current cap, is not capable of generating enough revenue to do the job. We therefore, respectfully ask you to support increasing the PFC cap and indexing the fee to inflation in order to protect its future purchasing power. We also urge you to share the importance of modernizing the PFC and investing in our airports with your fellow members of Congress.

Again, the future economic viability of Washington-Dulles International Airport is vital to the future economic viability of Loudoun County. As Loudoun County's Representative in Congress we look forward to working with you to ensure Washington-Dulles International remains a competitive world class airport.

Thank you for considering the Loudoun County Chamber's position on these important topics. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at [bfauls@loudouchamber.org](mailto:bfauls@loudouchamber.org) or at 571-209-9024.

Sincerely,

Brian Fauls  
Manager, Government Affairs