

July 13, 2001
News Release
Source: Alliance of Residents Concerning O'Hare
Resign Senator Durbin

The Alliance of Residents Concerning O'Hare is calling for the resignation of Illinois Senator Richard Durbin, a Democrat, for his support of more deadly and toxic pollution that could seriously affect the health of over 25% of the population of the State of Illinois, most of northern Illinois.

Durbin, a supposed environmentalist, who has previously gone after the tobacco industry, coal burning power plants, water pollution and others, fails to address the most serious toxic polluter in the state, O'Hare Airport.

His support of O'Hare expansion and more flights will bring more death and disease to the residents in our communities, especially the city of Chicago, since it is downwind.

Durbin supposedly opposes anti-environmental riders, has made the following statements: "I fought to delete these anti-environment riders when the bill was before the Senate...These riders are a backdoor attack on our environment and an attempt to protect special interests profiting." And finally, "Special interests are using these riders to circumvent the normal legislative process and avoid public scrutiny." Yet, the Senator pulled off the same deplorable action yesterday, as the Senate Appropriations Committee moved forward to federally intervene to force expansion of O'Hare Airport. The rider was part of a bill to fund roads, ports and the air traffic system next year. Durbin not only supported the rider, he authored it.

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Durbin is well aware of the significant public health problems, and is also most probably aware that they cannot be adequately mitigated by technology for decades. Over the years his staff has been informed of the serious problems. Durbin has been sent study after study, with overwhelming evidence of massive public health and environmental problems caused by airports.

Senator Durbin knows full well that airport expansion at O'Hare is not to relieve delays but to accommodate massive growth; it is unconscionable that Durbin is supporting any modification of the airport.

What is needed is not only a moratorium on new flights, but also a reduction in existing flights so that we can deal with the overwhelming problems we have now. There are other, better ways of affording the transportation growth and lessening any possible operational delays than expanding the airport, which will increase the epidemic of "airport poisoning" that the airport and aircraft causes the population. Some of the better options are: increasing funding for advanced use of video conferencing, building a world-class high-speed rail system and/or building a wayport system.

With all of the airports that are expanding in Illinois, Senator Durbin should be taking the lead in informing the public as the harm that they cause the citizens, and he should be protecting them, not promoting their demise. He should be promoting alternatives, rather than uncontrolled expansion of the problem.

Evidently, Durbin does not care about the majority, who do not fly but who are harmed by those that do. Airport and airport-related activities are major sources of

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significant air, water, noise and ground pollution, and environmental justice demands that one group of people not benefit by inflicting environmental degradation affecting the quality of life of another.

Senator Durbin, we are particularly offended by your statement, "Those who want to turn O'Hare into some sort of forest preserve ought to take the next plane out of town." (Chicago Tribune. May 21.) Your environmental intentions and concerns are very well projected in this statement.

So basically, what are some of the solutions? In order to truly alleviate O'Hare's problems, including over-scheduling delays, we must decrease flights to safer and healthier levels. AReCO echoes the voice of the US-EPA on its comments regarding the Boston Logan expansion: Enough is enough, clean up the environmental and public health mess they have, send the planes elsewhere to an environmentally safer airport that is well-buffered and strictly zoned, and develop other modes of mass transit such as a world-class high speed rail system.

By his support and efforts to expand a small, antiquated O'Hare Airport that wreaks havoc on scores of surrounding communities, Durbin has been intentionally ridiculous and harmful to the community. He needs to resign, now!

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