

MEDIA ALERT

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DETAILS OF ILLINOIS SENATOR RICHARD DURBIN'S O'HARE BILL (S.1786) "National Aviation Capacity Expansion Act":

Durbin's bill would:

- Mandate that Ryan's, Daley and Durbin's massive O'Hare expansion plan be built even if it is not safe, healthy, or has other public welfare or environmental problems.
- Give away to the federal government Illinois' authority (local control) to protect the health, safety, and welfare of its people in what have been local decisions on airport development.
- Exempt the planned mammoth expansion of O'Hare from complying with the requirements of the Clean Air Act.
- Shortcut the process for evaluating the harmful public health and other environmental impacts of the expansion and considering less harmful alternatives by "expediting" all such environmental reviews.
- Entirely cut off the National Environmental Policy Act's critical environmental review (public health and environmental protection) process (EIS) if Chicago's pre-construction processes would not be completed by December 1, 2004. This would be done by commanding the federal government to begin constructing the mammoth expansion on July 1, 2004, if it is not expected to begin by December 1, 2004, regardless of whether the EIS or other legal and pre-construction processes have been completed.
- Durbin's "noise mitigation" provisions are severely inadequate because he grossly underestimates the number of people who are harmed by O'Hare's noise, fails to protect most human living areas such as multi-family dwellings, senior citizens homes, places of child care, as well as the entire outdoor environment; and fails to use the current science on noise and health. Also in his "noise mitigation" section, Durbin cynically appears to "cap" the number of flights at 2000 noise levels, yet such a cap would be unenforceable under current law.
- Durbin also would mandate building eight runways with six parallel runways that are spaced too close together to be safe, ignoring Federal Aviation Administration safety regulations on runway spacing for simultaneous landings in bad visibility conditions as well as for take-offs and landings in good conditions.
- Durbin also, to further "cement" his unjustifiable plan, intends to drastically limit the people's right to bring suit against this plan.
- If this bill were to become law, it would set a horrible precedent to occur in other states.

While we have not yet fully analyzed the Lipinski bill (H.R. 3479) to date, the language is similar except it is worse in so far as it would give the FAA almost total control over the environmental protection process by forcing the Army Corp of Engineers to shortcut its wetland permitting process, and prohibiting EPA from determining and publishing findings as to whether expanding O'Hare would be unsatisfactory from the standpoint of public health, welfare or environmental quality.