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For Immediate Release

07/05/04

Durbin's Anti-environmental Actions Harms Millions

Chicago—In stark contrast to the recently reported actions of U.S. Senator Richard Durbin (D-IL) to weaken our environmental protection, the Alliance of Residents Concerning O'Hare (AReCO) is petitioning the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to stay the course and maintain proper environmental procedures.

Durbin asked the FAA to shortcut the environmental review process of the proposed massive O'Hare airport expansion. Our environmental laws and regulations are meant to protect the health of 5-8 million people that are significantly affected by O'Hare airport related toxic and health damaging emissions, as well as the safety, welfare and tax dollars of the American public.

The executive director of the Alliance of Residents Concerning O'Hare, Jack Saporito, asks of Senator Durbin "What are you thinking? I know you are aware that O'Hare related operations burns upwards of a billion gallons of fuel near O'Hare annually, emitting thousands of tons of toxic air pollutants each day, harming the health of millions of people! You also know O'Hare emits a heavy concentration of unusual pollution on the populace and that the Chicago area has unusual wind patterns both causing major concern. Don't you care?"

Saporito went on to say, "Durbin should also be aware that the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency's study of O'Hare is inept and does not reflect the dozens of credible airport studies that have been done globally. Rightly, they show that airports are unusual major polluters causing significant health problems of pandemic proportions. One O'Hare study showed that its operations cost the community about \$7 billion annually, just from the cancer its emissions cause and billions more in other unfunded airport-poisoning costs (asthma, cardiovascular, etc.).

As reported in Conscious Choice (Feb. 2002) *O'Hare, Meigs, and Peotone*, this is not the first time that Durbin and some other Illinois legislators have been trying to do away with our environmental and safety protections with regard to O'Hare expansion. Conscious Choice stated "This is not a very impressive performance from either of these elected officials [also, Congressman Lipinski (D-IL)], especially the supposedly pro-environment Durbin," referring to the fact that Durbin introduced bills that specifically exempted the massive O'Hare expansion from complying with the Clean Air Act, and would short-circuit the environmental review process; thereby, completely bypassing the reviews required under the National Environmental Policy Act.

In contrast, on behalf of the millions of people whose health, safety and welfare are compromised by O'Hare operations, AReCO is petitioning the FAA and EPA to do the right thing and not bend to political pressure.

Additionally, AReCO is petitioning for a longer public review process, giving the general public time to digest just how this project would harm them and the better long-term

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transportation choices that are available. Normally, only a 30-day public comment period is given after the FAA releases the draft environmental document. However, because of the length of the document (thousands of pages), importance and the complexity of the proposal, AReCO is requesting an additional 60 days, (90 days total). This is to let the public and the media have enough time to analyze the volumes of technical and legal data and enlist the needed professional and legal help.

Saporito asks of Senator Durbin, "What is he trying to cover up? Let the environmental process protect us. Why would the so-called environmentalist push so hard to shortcut our environmental protection of what is arguably one of the world's worst polluters and certainly, the top local polluter to millions?"

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Editor's note: AReCO is a respected Chicago area organization recognized globally and with many years experience, that has been at the vanguard of airport and aircraft related public health, safety and environmental issues since the mid-nineties. AReCO represents membership in over 40 area communities with municipal, family and professional membership from across the country. It has experience with over one hundred environmental processes nationally.