

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

August 8, 2014

The Honorable Michael P. Huerta  
Administrator  
Federal Aviation Administration  
800 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20591

Mr. Joseph Bertoni  
Acting Commissioner  
New Jersey Department of Transportation  
P.O. Box 600  
Trenton, NJ 08625

Dear Administrator Huerta and Acting Commissioner Bertoni:

We write to you concerning the issue of tour helicopter traffic in the northern New Jersey-New York City airspace, a problem that presents increasing concerns for the safety and quality of life of our constituents. We appreciate the willingness the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), including Region II Administrator Carmine Gallo, has shown to work with us on this issue, including participation in a number of discussions and roundtable events regarding this growing problem. However, after multiple meetings with the FAA and other stakeholders, there has been no clear indication of which entities possess the authority to eliminate the nuisance of tour helicopters.

Tour helicopters have proliferated in recent years, flying with increasing frequency during most waking hours of the day. In addition to the ever-present disruption to the quality of life in the neighborhoods along the helicopter's flight paths, the limited regulation these operators are subject to presents serious risks for both those traveling in the helicopters and those on the ground below. Our work to address this problem has been curtailed by inadequate ability to track the number of helicopters operating in the airspace, as well as the lack of any enforcement mechanism for agreed upon helicopter flights paths over New Jersey or New York City.

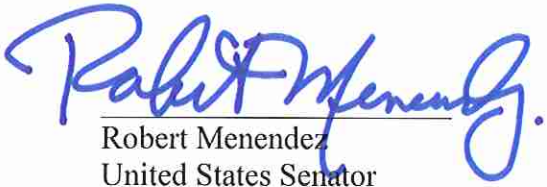
Although interim steps have been taken to address this concern, including the closure of the Paulus Hook heliport, these actions have proven insufficient to provide relief for New Jerseyans and other area residents. We write to you today to express our support for a comprehensive ban on tourist helicopters in the northern New Jersey-New York City airspace, and to enlist your assistance in advancing this goal. In implementing such a ban, it is critical to ensure that helicopter operations closing in New York City do not simply relocate to New Jersey, or vice versa. In particular, we fully support New York's efforts to close the downtown Manhattan heliport.

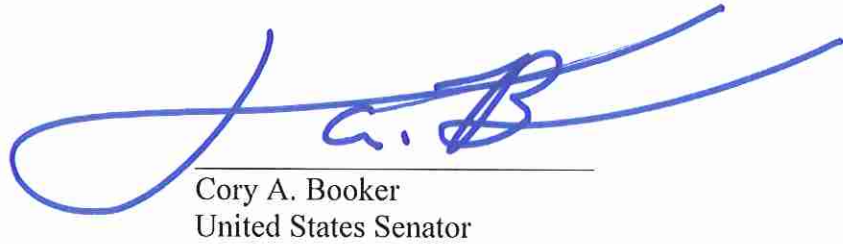
As federal representatives, we ask that the FAA provide guidance on additional authority needed to implement and enforce a ban on tour helicopters that present public nuisance and safety concerns. Given the number of stakeholders involved in this matter, it is our hope that the FAA

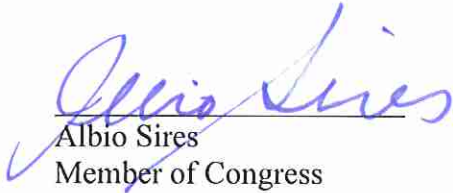
can bring leadership to bear in finding a solution—whether using current agency authority, or whether this entails Congress providing your agency with additional tools or resources.

This issue of four helicopters is vital to the quality of life and safety of our communities. We appreciate your previous efforts in working towards a solution to this problem, and hope to continue that partnership to find a lasting solution for New Jerseyans.

Sincerely,

  
Robert Menendez  
United States Senator

  
Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator

  
Albio Sires  
Member of Congress