

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 6, 2003

The Honorable Norm Mineta
Secretary
Department of Transportation
400 Seventh Street, SW
Washington, DC 20590-0001

Dear Secretary Mineta:

We write to you today with regard to the three Maryland airports that remain closed to transient general aviation traffic, College Park Airport (CGS), Potomac Airfield (VKX), and Hyde Field (W32). At present, the provisions of Special Federal Aviation Regulation 94 allow only locally based aircraft to operate to or from these airports. Although the current regulation was a critical first step in reopening College Park, Potomac, and Hyde Field, the continued prohibition on transient operations undermines the viability of each airport and threatens their future existence.

It is our understanding that the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) last year filed a petition with the FAA to fully open up these airports. After three months the FAA Office of Rulemaking has formally registered this petition. In addition to reopening these airports to transient traffic this petition also asks for vetted pilots to be permitted to conduct air traffic pattern work at all three airports. If this cannot be granted, then operations between these 3 airports by the already vetted, locally based pilots should be allowed. General aviation is the only segment of the aviation community restricted by SFAR 94, despite the fact that it has never been used for terrorist activities.

Currently, only 360 pilots are authorized to fly into the three airports combined. The daily operations count is a fraction compared to pre-September 11th traffic. Prior to the airspace closure in September, the "DC3" airports hosted over 110,000 annual GA operations, illustrating their importance for access to the Washington, DC area.

The operating restrictions have caused Maryland and her airport operators, aircraft owners, and businesses that depend upon the continued airport operations significant economic hardship. If the restrictions are not lifted soon, it is likely that these three airports will not survive. This would be a tragedy for all three – and especially for College Park, the oldest continuously operating airport in the world.

In addition to the plight of these three airports with continued operating restrictions, we would remind you of the ongoing economic hardships suffered by the other small, general aviation airports in Maryland that were closed for varying periods of time following September 11th. These airports and many of the small businesses directly associated with their operation deserve federal assistance to overcome the continuing debts and other burdens that resulted from

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the federally mandated closings. We urge you to consider the plight of these businesses and work with us to address these losses.

We respectfully ask for your timely review of these important matters and action to preserve these airports that are so critical to the economic vitality of Maryland and the Washington metropolitan area.

With Kindest regards, we are

