



Rhode Island Airport Corporation

H. 6067 – PRESERVATION OF SAFE AIRSPACE BILL

STATEMENT OF THE RHODE ISLAND AIRPORT CORPORATION

The Rhode Island Airport Corporation strongly supports H. 6067, legislation needed to ensure the safety of the public – including pilots, passengers, and surrounding communities that benefit from public airports.

When a community needs an airport it asks for federal financial support. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), as a quid pro quo, asks the community to take on certain obligations to enable the aviation system work smoothly throughout the United States. One of these obligations is to keep the air space clear of hazards around the airport.

As a response, the Rhode Island State laws have put safeguards in place as one of many lines of defenses to ensure the safety of Rhode Island's airspace. It is important to note that the first line of defense to address air space hazards is meant to be the enforcement of town zoning, however such measures have not been implemented and/or enforced at Westerly and Newport Airports.

As a second line of defense, the FAA steps in to offer purchase trees and airspace easements. Usually most home owners happily accept offers to have the FAA purchase airspace easements, but certain neighbors have declined to accept those offers, resulting in litigation which continues to languish in court.

The Preservation of Safe Airspace bill provides no new powers for the State but will only clarify the language in the law to make it abundantly clear that the State of Rhode Island remains able to mitigate airspace hazards and allow for continued FAA funding essential for the continued safe operation of the airport, as well as future investments in airport improvements, and end the continued shortening of runways to keep pilots and the community safe. H. 6067 provides a statewide resolution to this matter by clarifying state law as consistent with federal law, while improving airspace protection coordination among local, state and federal jurisdictions for publicly owned airports in the state.

The bill is NOT an airport expansion bill and provides no new powers for the State but will only clarify the language in the law to make it abundantly clear that the State of Rhode Island Department of Transportation remains able to mitigate airspace hazards and allow for continued FAA funding essential for the continued safe operation of the airport, as well as future investments in airport improvements, and end the continued shortening of runways to keep pilots and the community safe.