

1717 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-1303
(202) 225-5701
(202) 225-1012 FAX
TOLL FREE FROM IL (866) 822-5701

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1303

April 8, 2013

The Honorable Michael Huerta
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)
800 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20591

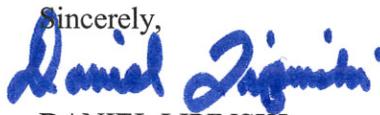
Dear Administrator Huerta:

As Illinois' most senior member of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, I write in strong opposition to the potential overnight closure of Chicago Midway International Airport's air traffic control tower. Given the importance of the airport to the national air transportation network, I respectfully request that you provide information on why the FAA placed Midway on the potential overnight tower closure list; FAA's projections of both the local and the national impacts of such a closure at Midway; FAA's involvement to date in reaching out to potentially impacted stakeholders; and the process/timeframe for making a final decision on an overnight closure.

At the Aviation Subcommittee hearing held on February 27, 2013, I asked you about the impact of sequestration on the Midway tower, as it appeared on FAA's "Facilities Where Overnight Shifts Could be Eliminated" target list. You responded by confirming that the FAA is considering a "midnight closure" at Midway, that FAA is "focused on the universe of facilities that fall into a certain category, 150,000 operations or 10,000 commercial operations or fewer," and that FAA is having a "conversation" with industry stakeholders "to understand what their operations are."

Midway plays a significant role in Chicago's status as a global air hub. It is the nation's 25th largest airport with 9,134,576 passenger enplanements in 2011, representing a 7.23% increase from 2010. Midway is home to Southwest Airlines' largest hub, which conducts more than 160,000 commercial operations per year alone. A midnight closure at Midway, located approximately 12 nautical miles from Chicago O'Hare International Airport – the second busiest airport in the United States – would present significant operational challenges for all carriers and general aviation users throughout the region. Last Friday, I visited Midway and met with members of the Southwest Airlines Pilots' Association, Southwest Operations Department, and the National Air Traffic Controllers Association to discuss these challenges.

Given the importance of Midway to the region and our country, I strongly oppose the potential overnight closure of its air traffic control tower. I appreciate in advance your responses to my questions, and I hope the FAA will be taking a closer look at the problems an overnight tower closure at Midway would cause. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions and I look forward to working with you to resolve this issue.

Sincerely,

DANIEL LIPINSKI
Member of Congress