

VERONICA ESCOBAR
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DEMOCRATIC WOMEN'S CAUCUS
DEPUTY WHIP
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CONGRESSIONAL HISPANIC CAUCUS
NEW DEMOCRAT COALITION

June 18, 2023

The Honorable Sam Graves
Chair
Transportation & Infrastructure Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rick Larsen
Ranking Member
Transportation & Infrastructure Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Chair
Commerce, Science, & Transportation Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ted Cruz
Ranking Member
Commerce, Science, & Transportation Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairs Graves and Cantwell and Ranking Members Larsen and Cruz:

As Congress considers the 2023 Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reauthorization bill this week and in Conference later this year, I write to respectfully request that any proposed reforms to the Perimeter Rule (U.S. Code § 49109) take into consideration the enormous value to communities like my district of El Paso, Texas, and need for non-stop flights from the El Paso International Airport (ELP) to Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (DCA).

On April 18, 2023, I testified before the U.S. House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure during the Member Day Hearing, where I shared how nonstop flights from ELP to DCA were a top priority for El Pasoans this FAA, as it has been for years now. Earlier this year, I also co-sponsored the Direct Capital Access Act (DCA Act) that seeks to add 28 in- and beyond-perimeter daily flights at DCA in the 2023 FAA bill. This week, I urge you to support the compromise amendment, which I am proud to support, put forth by Representatives Hank Johnson (GA-04) and Burgess Owens (UT-04) to get more flights to communities beyond the perimeter while maintaining the existing flights out of DCA.

It is crucial to consider the interests and needs of communities that could significantly benefit from enhanced air connectivity to our nation's capital throughout any deliberation on potential changes to the Perimeter Rule, which currently restricts the number of long-distance flights from DCA. I am proud to support El Paso, Texas, a binational community situated on the U.S.-Mexico border with a significant federal law enforcement and military presence, including the 1st Armored Division at Fort Bliss, White Sands Missile Range, U.S. Customs and Border

Protection, the International Boundary and Water Commission, Joint Task Force North, in addition to being one of the busiest trade corridors in the country, as a prime candidate for the inclusion of non-stop flights to DCA.

El Paso stands as one of our nation's most significant military and veteran communities. The region is home to Fort Bliss Army Base and White Sands Missile Range, the two largest Department of Defense (DoD) installations in the United States, which are home to nearly 100,000 Servicemembers and their Families, in addition to over 46,000 veterans in the region. The installations are central to military assets that play a crucial role in the training, deployment, and support of the U.S. Army's forces, including testing and development of military equipment and defense systems for the Department.

El Paso thrives as a diverse and dynamic region, where cultures, languages, and economies intertwine. Its proximity to Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, creates an exceptional cross-border relationship that fosters an extensive flow of trade and commerce. El Paso serves as a vital gateway for international trade, with substantial commercial activity occurring through its ports of entry and where an estimated \$81.9 billion in trade flows into the American economy every year through our local ports alone. Our region's status as a binational community and the consequential trade and commerce that flows through the region significantly contribute to the U.S. economy. Providing better connectivity to other major cities would further economic development, lead to job creation, and the movement of commerce and people.

El Paso's role as a military community and driver of economic activity on the border and throughout the nation makes it a prime strategic location for exemption from the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) "Perimeter Rule". Allowing non-stop flights between El Paso (ELP) and Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (DCA) would also meet the region's increasing passenger demand. There are not currently any non-stop flights between ELP and DCA, the airport closest to the Pentagon, Arlington National Cemetery, Quantico, and many other important sites for the military community in and around the nation's capital.

I urge you to consider communities like El Paso, Texas in your deliberations regarding Perimeter Rule exemptions. I look forward to working with you on this and other matters in support of our nation's transportation and infrastructure needs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Veronica Escobar". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress (TX-16)