



**ARSAC Alliance for a Regional Solution to Airport Congestion**  
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April 13, 2015

Hon. Maxine Waters  
Member of Congress, 43<sup>rd</sup> District  
10124 S. Broadway, Suite 1  
Los Angeles, CA 90003

Re: FAA re-authorization- airfield safety at Los Angeles International Airport (LAX)

Dear Congresswoman Waters:

We are asking you to include language in the upcoming Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) re-authorization bill to upgrade airfield safety at LAX. These upgrades include tower staffing, Runway Status Lights (RSL) and a new control tower.

We are gravely concerned about airfield safety at LAX. As you may be aware, LAX recently displaced Chicago O'Hare as the second busiest airport in the United States and is now the fifth busiest airport in the world. Federal resources to maintain a safe operating condition at LAX are lacking; now is the time to have the appropriate resources in place before a fatal accident occurs. We cannot, and should not, wait for a fatality to do the right thing. While the FAA and Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA), the City of Los Angeles department that operates LAX, may not be asking for these resources now, your inclusion of these items in the FAA re-authorization bill will require needed safety improvements, for which we have asked for a decade, to make LAX safer sooner rather than too late.

#### 1. Controller staffing

LAX is supposed to have 47 controllers assigned to the LAX tower. Currently, there are only 37 controllers staffing the tower. These controllers are often working overtime six days a week. For about a decade, we have heard about the understaffing issue from the local controllers union president and most recently from tower management. We have raised the controlling staffing issue repeatedly with LAX and FAA management with no positive response. In the long term, using overtime to pay for tower understaffing is a recipe for disaster. Controllers have a highly stressful and important safety job- they cannot be tired at work. Please add into the FAA re-authorization bill staffing and funding for 47 highly qualified controllers to work in the LAX tower. Since recruitment and retention of these controllers is vitally important in such a high-cost area as western Los Angeles County, there should be additional pay and/or benefits to help controllers afford housing in the greater LAX area. Perhaps federal family housing in places such as at Fort McArthur in San Pedro should be made available to controllers on a space available basis to help ease controllers' housing expenses?

#### 2. Runway Status Lights

The FAA should be required to complete the full installation of RSL at LAX. It was through ARSAC's persistence that the FAA finally approved and partially installed RSL at LAX in 2005. RSL is a low cost, high safety value technology that has proven to reduce runway incursions. Former FAA Administrator Randy Sturgell credited RSL with a 50% reduction in runway incursions in one year. Runway incursions continue to occur at LAX where RSL has not been installed. It is time that the RSL installation be completed at all runway entrances at LAX. Please add language to authorize and fund the final build out of RSL at LAX.

Please note that ARSAC rejects increased runway separation as a solution to reduce runway incursions. In May 2013, we sued LAX and the City of Los Angeles to prevent the north runway from being moved 260 feet closer to Westchester/Playa del Rey homes, businesses, schools and churches. As noted in the North Airfield Safety Study (NASS), prepared by six distinguished aviation safety professors with NASA, there would be a negligible safety benefit to adding a centerfield taxiway between the north runways. Increased controller staffing, a new control

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tower and enhanced signage, striping and RSL will have far greater safety and environmental benefits than a centerfield taxiway on the north airfield.

**3. New control tower**

Please add language into the FAA re-authorization bill to authorize and fund the construction of a new air traffic control tower at LAX. The current tower, built in 1996, has blind spot areas of the LAX airfield. As seen on the FAA chart for LAX, these blind spot areas are known as "ATC (air traffic control) Non-Visibility Areas." Since the construction of the Bradley West terminal and the soon-to-be-built Midfield Satellite Concourse (MSC), the number of ATC Non-Visibility areas has increased and will continue to get worse. These non-visibility areas also happen to be where most of the New Large Aircraft (Aircraft Design Group VI) such as the Airbus A380 operate on the airfield. Due to the A380's massive 262-foot wingspan (versus a 212 feet wingspan for the Boeing 747-400 and 777-300ER), special handling is needed for these giant Airbus A380 aircraft. Controllers need to have a complete, unobstructed view of the LAX airfield to ensure the safety of everyone at LAX.

Please feel free to contact us with any questions. We forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



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**About ARSAC**

Founded in 1995, the Alliance for a Regional Solution to Airport Congestion is a grassroots community organization dedicated to increasing utilization of outlying regional airports such as Ontario and Palmdale to meet Southern California's future airport capacity needs and ensure that these airports can be fully utilized in any emergency conditions. Although ARSAC opposes expanding LAX into surrounding airport communities, it does support a safe, secure, modern and convenient LAX.