

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 23, 2025

The Honorable Steve Womack  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing  
and Urban Development, and Related Agencies  
2358-A Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable James E. Clyburn  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing  
and Urban Development, and Related Agencies  
1036 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington DC, 20515

Dear Chairman Womack and Ranking Member Clyburn,

As you begin work on the Fiscal Year 2026 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies appropriations bill, we respectfully ask that you include report language directing the Department of Transportation (DOT), in coordination with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), to commission an independent review of airspace design, civil-military coordination, and operational safety in the National Capital Region, with a particular focus on Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (DCA).

We are deeply concerned by the conditions that led to the tragic collision between American Airlines Flight 5342 and an Army Black Hawk helicopter that killed 67 people on the night of January 29, 2025. As you are well aware, the airspace above and around our nation's capital is highly complex, with large volumes of commercial, law enforcement, and military aircraft operating in close proximity. DCA itself has the busiest runway in the country.

While the National Transportation Safety Board's (NTSB) investigation into the collision is ongoing, there are other sources of expertise that can contribute to the safety of this airspace, military servicemembers, and the traveling public. We believe that an independent review of the airspace, coordination between civil and military air traffic, and operational safety, including whether DCA's current total flight volume exceeds the airport's operational capabilities within normal operating hours, could provide valuable insight to Congress and the relevant federal agencies as they develop policies to improve airspace safety.

As such, we respectfully request that you include the following report language:

*Independent Safety Review of DCA Airspace and Coordination.*—The Committee directs the Department of Transportation, in coordination with the Federal Aviation Administration, to commission an independent review of airspace design, civil-military coordination, and operational safety in the National Capital Region, with particular focus on Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (DCA).



The review shall be conducted by an independent panel of experts in aviation safety, airspace operations, and civil-military coordination. Panel members shall be selected by the Department of Transportation in consultation with the National Transportation Safety Board, and the relevant congressional committees. Panel members shall include representatives from academia, former regulators currently unaffiliated with FAA or DoD, relevant stakeholders, unions, and nationally recognized safety institutions. The panel shall be formed within 60 days of enactment and the FAA shall not chair, direct, or control the panel's work.

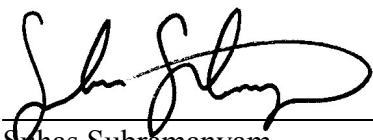
The review shall assess: historical and ongoing risks associated with DCA airspace design and usage, including historical incidents relevant to current protocols and whether DCA's current flight volume exceeds the airport's operational capabilities within normal operating hours; the adequacy of coordination protocols between the FAA, Department of Defense, and other entities involved in or affected by airspace coordination; patterns of near-miss incidents involving military aircraft; and structural, cultural, or procedural barriers to risk identification and accountability.

The Committee directs DOT and FAA to allocate sufficient resources and ensure timely completion of the review, and expects full cooperation from all relevant federal agencies, including the Department of Defense. This includes access to non-classified data, documentation, and personnel. The Committee expects the review to be conducted using existing discretionary funds.

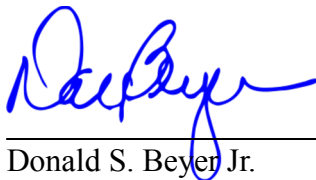
A public summary of findings and recommendations authored by the panel and sufficiently detailed to convey key conclusions without redacting non-sensitive procedural information shall be submitted to the Committee and published online within 180 days of the panel's formation. The full report of the panel shall be submitted to the Committee and made available to other relevant congressional committees upon request. DOT and FAA shall respond publicly in writing within 90 days, outlining any planned actions or policy changes.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. Our offices and the families of the victims of this tragic accident stand ready to assist you in ensuring the safety of this important airspace.

Sincerely,



Suhas Subramanyam  
Member of Congress



Donald S. Beyer Jr.  
Member of Congress



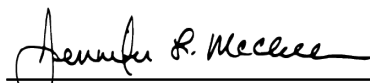
Gabe Amo  
Member of Congress





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Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress



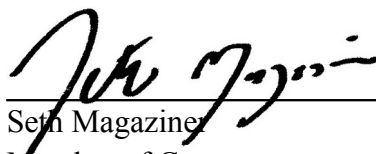
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Jennifer L. McClellan  
Member of Congress



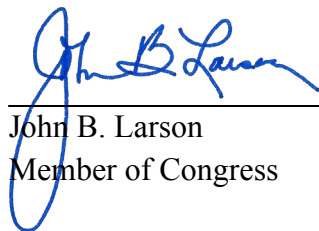
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William R. Timmons, IV  
Member of Congress




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Seth Magaziner  
Member of Congress



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John B. Larson  
Member of Congress



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Steny H. Hoyer  
Member of Congress



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Cleo Fields  
Member of Congress



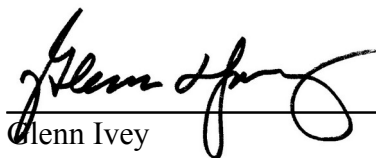
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Jim Tokuda  
Member of Congress



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Seth Moulton  
Member of Congress



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Glenn Ivey  
Member of Congress



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Paul D. Tonko  
Member of Congress



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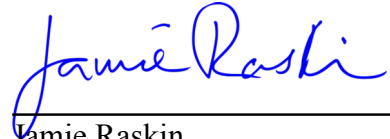
Andre Carson  
Member of Congress





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Shri Thanedar  
Member of Congress



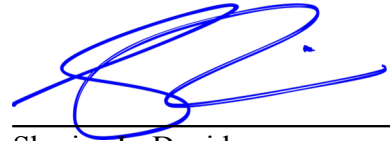
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Jamie Raskin  
Member of Congress



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Rick Larsen  
Member of Congress



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Sharice L. Davids  
Member of Congress