

FAA reform bill raises concern from Queens leaders

The FAA reauthorization bill, called the Aviation Innovation Reform and Reauthorization (AIRR) Act, is being met with skepticism from leaders in Northern Queens.

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Photo by Michael Shain

Northern Queens communities are paying close attention to the proposed FAA reauthorization bill, called the Aviation Innovation Reform and Reauthorization Act.

On Feb. 3, the House Transportation Subcommittee unveiled a proposed law to increase regulations on noise quality in communities near airports.

Yet borough lawmakers and activists remain skeptical.

“There is no question we need a long-term FAA reauthorization that ensures the safety of the flying public, makes investments in research and development, and helps create good paying jobs,” U.S. Rep. Joe Crowley (D-Jackson Heights) said. Crowley helped form the House Quiet

Skies Caucus in 2014 with several other members of Congress, including U.S. Rep. Grace Meng (D-Flushing).

“Unfortunately, as the bill currently stands, I have many concerns, including that it contains an attempt to privatize air traffic control. However, if there is a silver lining, it is that we may finally see a concerted effort to address the very serious issue of aircraft noise pollution.”

The bill would require the Federal Aviation Administration to conduct a study on the effect of aircraft noise exposure on communities around airports and to consider noise when approving new departure flight paths. It would also require that the FAA review community involvement practices when implementing an entirely new airspace design, and make recommendations on how to engage the community in these specific instances.

“The provision of the AIRR Act that has gotten the most press is the proposal to take air traffic control away from the FAA and privatize it, controlled by a corporation whose board of directors would be composed of the airlines and the unions,” said Janet McEneaney, president of the Quiet Skies advocacy group. “If such a corporation came into existence, our communities would have to be significantly represented on the board.”

The state Comptroller’s Office has also announced that it will be conducting a survey on noise in New York City neighborhoods and would like city residents to take the survey.

The city, which is in the process of distributing the survey, is hoping to learn about residents’ experience with noise in neighborhoods and solicit ideas for noise mitigation. The survey, which follows a nationwide FAA impact study, must be completed by those who are interested by March 15.

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