

## 2013 NY Congressmembers' Press Release To FAA Re Helicopter Noise

Friday, December 20, 2013

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### **GILLIBRAND, SCHUMER, NADLER, VELÁZQUEZ, GRIMM URGE FAA TO DEVELOP PLAN TO REDUCE EXCESSIVE HELICOPTER NOISE FOR MANHATTAN, BROOKLYN, AND STATEN ISLAND RESIDENTS**

#### ***Elected Officials Press FAA to Restrict Flight Hours of Operation and Frequency of Helicopters Taking Off and Landing in Lower Manhattan, Ensure that Helicopters Operating Around New York Harbor Follow Flight Paths***

New York, NY – Today, U.S. Senators Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) and Charles Schumer (D-NY) and Representatives Jerrold Nadler (D-NY), Nydia Velázquez (D-NY), and Michael Grimm (R-NY) pressed the FAA to take action to reduce excessive helicopter noise for Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Staten Island residents. With the rising level and frequency of tourist helicopter noise negatively impacting the quality of life for many New Yorkers, the elected officials asked FAA Eastern Regional Administrator Carmine Gallo to work with the local community to develop a plan that would result in the reduction of helicopter noise levels near residential neighborhoods along New York Harbor, and ensure that commercial helicopters flying over Staten Island adhere to flight paths already in place.

In a letter to FAA Eastern Regional Administrator Gallo, the officials wrote, “We are writing regarding concerns that have been brought to our attention from residents living near routes that are heavily used by helicopters on the New York City side of New York Harbor. It has come to our attention that excessive helicopter noise continues to rise to a level and frequency that negatively affects the quality of life for those living along the Harbor... We would like to work with you and with representatives of the local community to develop a plan to monitor and ultimately reduce the amount of noise experienced by Manhattan, Brooklyn and Staten Island residents.”

“The constant barrage of helicopter noise deeply impacts the quality of life for many New Yorkers and is simply unacceptable,” said **Senator Gillibrand**. “The FAA must take needed action to provide relief for Hudson River waterfront communities and give City families a peace of mind.”

“Helicopter noise is a constant nuisance for many people in residential neighborhoods across the City, which is why my colleagues and I are urging the FAA to develop a rational solution,” said **Senator Schumer**. “Helicopter traffic is an inevitable part of life in New York, but there is no reason pilots can’t travel along more regular over-water pathways that avoid populated areas.”

“Sadly, the airspace above Manhattan and Brooklyn seems more like the Wild West than the airspace above one of the most populated cities in America,” said **Representative Nadler**, the most senior member from the Northeast on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. “The FAA should reign in low flying helicopters and those that veer off of approved flight paths. These helicopters are both too noisy and too dangerous.”

“Noise from helicopter flights are an ongoing disturbance for residents of Brooklyn and Lower Manhattan,” said **Representative Velázquez**. “The time is past due for the FAA to move forward in addressing this problem.”

“Between the tolls and the traffic, the last thing Staten Islanders need is another disturbance,” said **Representative Grimm**. “We are a residential borough and families should be able to enjoy a certain quality of life without the constant interruption from helicopter noise. The FAA must find a way to better enforce existing routes so that helicopters remain over the waterways and not over our homes.”

In recent years, Lower Manhattan, Brooklyn Heights and Red Hook neighborhoods have experienced a stream of helicopters taking off and landing at the Downtown Manhattan Heliport for tourism and other commercial flights around New York Harbor. Day and night, residents along the west side of Manhattan, particularly Upper West Siders, have reported helicopters flying low over the Hudson River Park and their homes as they cut across the borough on their way to the Bronx and Long Island, which has been a public disturbance. Red Hook residents complain that tourist helicopters fly south over Valentino Park and near homes before looping west to the Statue of Liberty. Congressional leaders called for a plan to monitor and reduce the amount of noise experienced by Brooklyn and Manhattan residents.

On Staten Island, officials pointed out that in some instances, helicopters are ignoring waterway routes already in place and taking shortcuts that result in flying at low altitudes over homes and residences. The Senators and Congress members called for stricter compliance to the established flight paths and if needed, putting measures in place to monitor and ensure that helicopters are following flight rules.

Senators Gillibrand and Schumer and Representatives Nadler, Velázquez, and Grimm also noted that any action the FAA takes to reduce excessive helicopter noise for New Jersey residents must also address noise concerns for New Yorkers across Manhattan, Brooklyn and Staten Island. Earlier this fall, Senator Robert Menendez and Representative Albio Sires announced an agreement with the FAA to reduce the flight hours and number of helicopters operating out of Paulus Hook Heliport, including restrictions from operating at night and limits to operating only one flight at a time instead of three at a time.

Full text of the letter is below:

*Dear Mr. Gallo,*

*We are writing regarding concerns that have been brought to our attention from residents living near routes that are heavily used by helicopters on the New York City side of New York Harbor. It has come to our attention that excessive helicopter noise continues to rise to a level and frequency that negatively affects the quality of life for those living along the Harbor, and we request your assistance in working to address this situation.*

*It is our understanding that you are working with officials and residents from New Jersey to address similar concerns, and therefore any action that is taken to address excessive helicopter noise for New Jersey residents must also address noise concerns of residents living in Manhattan, Brooklyn and Staten Island.*

*Residents living in Lower Manhattan, Brooklyn Heights and Red Hook neighborhoods have reported to us that they are experiencing a nearly constant barrage from helicopters taking off and landing at the Downtown Manhattan Heliport for tourist flights around New York Harbor. For instance, residents all along the west side of Manhattan and especially the Upper West Side have reported helicopters constantly flying low over the Hudson River Park and their homes and apartments as they cut across Manhattan on their way to the Bronx and Long Island. Similarly, residents in Red Hook complain of tourist helicopters flying south over Valentino Park and near homes before looping west to the Statue of Liberty.*

*On Staten Island, it has come to our attention to that in some instances, helicopters are ignoring established routes over waterways, and instead are taking shortcuts that result in helicopters flying at low altitudes over residential properties.*

*It is our belief that these flights must be conducted in a way that is sensitive to the families living in communities along the Harbor. We would like to work with you and with representatives of the local community to develop a plan to monitor and ultimately reduce the amount of noise experienced by Manhattan, Brooklyn and Staten Island residents.*

*These are not only tourism helicopters, but other commercial helicopters as well. To address this issue, we request that you work with the community and industry to ensure that the established waterway routes are adhered to and, if necessary, develop procedures for monitoring these flights paths to ensure compliance.*

*Thank you for your attention to this issue, and we look forward to working with you to provide relief to our constituents from excessive noise.*