



ASSOCIATION OF CIVILIAN TECHNICIANS CHAPTER #52

Statement of Al Kinney Association of Civilian Technicians (ACT) Pennsylvania Chapter ACT 52 Before the House Transportation Committee May 28, 2009

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee. My name is Al Kinney and I am president of ACT Chapter 52, which is part of the Pennsylvania Chapter of the Association of Civilian Technicians.

The Association of Civilian Technicians is the labor union that represents the federal civilian employees of the National Guard. On a nationwide basis, ACT is the fourth largest labor organization representing Department of Defense employees, and it is the largest independent union of its kind in the country.

National Guard technicians are a special class of federal civilian employees. By law, nearly all National Guard technicians are military members of the Guard. As federal civilian employees, we maintain and repair National Guard equipment and administer and train the traditional Guardsman (week end worriers) and we also serve as Guard members who deploy with our units and serve around the world.

At the 111th Fighter Wing, our ACT chapter represents about 300 National Guard technicians. We work in a wide variety of careers. We maintain the unit's A-10 aircraft to be used for training missions and deployable assets. The full time technician personnel, are the backbone of the Guard. We work together with active duty military as well as other Guard units across the country..

The National Guard technicians represented by ACT, and our National Guard forces in general, have a level of experience and expertise that far exceeds that of the active forces. I've been in the service for 27 years, and many of my co-workers have similar levels of experience. Today we have an

opportunity at Willow Grove and Horsham, to make the best possible use of our experience and our knowledge, as well as the infrastructure at the base. On behalf of the hard working men and women of the 111th Fighter Wing, I call on you not to let this chance pass us by.

Like everyone assigned to the 111th Fighter Wing, we were devastated when DoD announced its recommendation to close Willow Grove and deactivate our unit. We were encouraged when the federal court and BRAC Commission reversed the deactivation recommendation, even as we continued to be concerned about the lack of a definite flying mission for our unit. We saw the Congressional action to create the Horsham Joint Interagency Installation as a major step in the right direction and a means to save the base and save our unit.

At the time of the BRAC Commission report, we were told that the Commission encouraged the Air Force to keep A-10s at the 111th Fighter Wing, but we were told that this couldn't happen because the unit wouldn't have a operational airfield. Then with the federal legislation to establish the Joint Interagency Installation, we learned that the airfield could be saved. This means that, even if we lose the A-10s, our unit will have a shot at future flying missions.

There are lots of reasons why keeping a military flying mission at the new installation is important. From our perspective as a labor organization, of course it means our highly trained and exceptionally well-qualified technicians will be able to keep their full-time jobs and their military positions doing what they do best. Without a flying mission, nearly 100 full-time jobs are at risk at the 111th, and the unit may lose over 140 military slots. The transformation to a non-flying unit will involve different skill sets and different jobs for our personnel. So, as far as ACT is concerned, we want to keep a flying mission, and we know that this depends of a successful transition to the Joint Installation. With a functional airfield, we have a chance of securing a flying mission; without one, there is none.

Jobs and positions are important to us, but, let me just say, so are the missions we perform. Most – nearly all – of our members have deployed overseas since 9/11. As Guard members and as citizens, we care deeply about the capabilities of our country and our state to respond to emergencies and provide for homeland security and national defense. A successful Joint Interagency Installation at Horsham will contribute greatly to national, state and regional security. You've heard the base described as an emergency preparedness hub, and the base fits squarely within the concept for a national emergency center. We ask that you, our state legislature, encourage Congress to designate this installation as the pilot site for the national emergency center concept.

The future of the 111th and the success of the Joint Interagency Installation are closely related, and we want the Joint Interagency Installation to succeed so it can be used effectively by the Pennsylvania National Guard and other military and government users. We also support the concept of non-government "associated users." Every military base I've visited has non-governmental users, and what is proposed for the Horsham Joint Installation is a reasonable approach.

ACT is concerned that if either House Bill 111 or Senate Bill 48 becomes law in its current form, it will lead to disputes, disruptions and ultimately impair the successful implementation of the Joint

Interagency Installation. I don't want to repeat what General Sischo and Lt Col Smith have said, but it's obvious to anyone who reads these bills and compares them with federal law that these bills must be amended. How can we have a state law with a different scope, different definitions of the same exact terms and different descriptions of restrictions on the installation? In my opinion, this approach is an invitation to failure. And when it comes to emergency preparedness, homeland security and national defense, failure is not an option.

ACT asks the Pennsylvania General Assembly and the U.S. Congress and our local governments to become full partners in a joint effort to make this installation a success. We all know that it can't be done if there is sniping and nitpicking between various levels of government. And I fear that these bills before you today are a virtual guarantee of such sniping and nitpicking. Let's step back for a minute and examine what's important for our nation, our state and our region. Let's work together to make this installation a success that will be able to support a flying mission for years to come.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.