

**Pennsylvania House of Representatives Transportation Committee Hearing**  
**on SB 48 and HB 111**

**May 28, 2009**

**Testimony of State Senator Stewart J. Greenleaf**

I would like to thank Chairman Joseph F. Markosek for holding this hearing of the House Transportation Committee in Horsham Township regarding the future of the Joint Interagency Installation. I would also like to thank the committee for the opportunity to testify on this critical issue.

Following the Base Closure and Realignment Commission's (BRAC) recommendation in 2005 to close the Willow Grove Joint Naval Air Station, Horsham Township officials have been working to ensure that the land is used in a manner that will maintain the quality of life in the township and is consistent with the character of the surrounding community. However, federal legislation enacted since 2007 uses language that I feel will not preserve the military nature of the base and has the potential to allow commercial interests to operate from the airstrip.

A 2007 federal war spending measure designated the base as a Joint Interagency Installation for *performing* national defense, homeland security and emergency preparedness missions, fitting into Governor Rendell's plan to maintain the facility as a security center. A 2008 act of Congress has further defined civilian tenants of the base as associated users—non-governmental organizations and private entities that use the airfield for purposes *related* to national defense, homeland security and emergency preparedness missions.

Requiring tenants to carry out activities *related* to the mission of the base rather than *performing* the mission of the base fails to clearly define the activities that may take place there. The term *related* may be broadly interpreted and open the floodgates for business enterprises serving a wide range of interests to occupy the base, ultimately allowing unchecked commercial use of the runway.

The potential of commercial flights has raised concerns throughout the region, including noise from overhead planes, added traffic congestion, and companies seeking to use the facility as a tax-sheltered base of operations with runway access.

My legislation, Senate Bill 48, would prevent the base from becoming a commercial airport by limiting non-governmental users of the base to those *performing* homeland security, national defense, and emergency preparedness missions.

In addition, the development that would come with the new users would have considerable negative effects for the township such as the installation of additional sewer and water infrastructure. As well, additional resources would be needed for police, fire, and increased traffic.

There is currently no legal obligation for associated users to pay local property taxes or comply with local township ordinances such as zoning restrictions. As well, should Hatboro-Horsham school district no longer receive \$650,000 in annual impact aid from the federal government, area property taxes would increase.

The legislation requires all non-military occupants of the base to comply with local ordinances including zoning regulations and property taxes.

Also, once the base becomes a joint interagency installation, there is nothing to ensure the historical aviation museum would be allowed to remain on the premises. I am offering an amendment to SB 48 that would ensure that the museum, operated by the Delaware Valley Historical Aircraft Association, would remain in operation.

I and my colleagues, Representative Rick Taylor, sponsor of the complimentary House legislation, and Representative Tom Murt, are committed to seeing a bill pass that will protect Horsham Township.

I invite the members of this committee, while here in Horsham, to see the close proximity of the community to the base. Homes, schools, and businesses are within a mere stone's throw of the airstrip. For many years, this community has found a good neighbor in the military installation, however the dramatic changes that we foresee would erode the peaceful surroundings of these neighborhoods and significantly hurt this area in countless ways.

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