

**Rep. Thomas P. Murt**  
**JRB Willow Grove Remarks**  
**May 28, 2009**

**Chairman Markosek and Members of the Committee,**

**The Joint Reserve Base at Willow Grove is very special to me personally. As an Army Reservist, I spent most of my military career training at Willow Grove, and it was from Willow Grove that I deployed to Iraq in 2004 with the U.S. Army. What happens at the Joint Reserve Base at Willow Grove as it transforms into a new Joint Interagency Installation is important to me, to my constituents, and to this entire geographic region.**

**As Pennsylvania prepares to assume the role of landlord of the Joint Reserve Base at Willow Grove, many of my constituents have already taken the time to contact me to express their concerns about this new role of the base as a Joint Interagency Installation.**

**One of the most common concerns is the potential for overuse of the airfield by associated users at the new base. Constituents have expressed their concerns that the airfield at the new Joint Interagency Installation may evolve into a facility where there is an excessive amount of commercial, cargo, and passenger flights operating from the new facility under the very nebulous category of associated users. The concerns of these constituents are legitimate. Unrestricted civilian, commercial, or cargo air traffic at the new Joint Interagency Installation at Willow Grove would certainly reduce the quality of life for the surrounding communities. The sounds of an unknown number of planes taking off and landing, along with the added vehicular traffic that would surely be generated on Easton, County Line, and Horsham Roads, would serve to make the area around the base more congested than it already is, and possibly, a less desirable place to live and to raise a family. If restrictions and parameters are not set in-place legislatively as we are attempting to do, what could result is a decline in the quality-of-life for an entire region of the Commonwealth as well as justifiable concerns about public health and safety.**

**Mr. Chairman, in addition to flight restrictions being needed, there also must be some parameters established legislatively as to who and what may be considered as an associated user at the new Joint Interagency Installation. If anyone or any entity can become an associated user and use the airfield, then flight restrictions of any type are useless. Legislation must strictly define who and what an associated user might be at the new Joint Interagency Installation. Furthermore, legislation should articulate who makes the call and who decides what an associated user is and what will occur if an associated user uses the airfield for flights not relating to national defense, homeland security, or emergency preparedness.**

**With that in mind, I am pleased to be working with my colleagues on legislation to prohibit commercial, business, nongovernmental, or non-mission-related aircraft operations at the base.**

**One of the common objectives of Senate Bill 48 and House Bill 111 is to protect the quality of life for our residents, as the Joint Reserve Base at Willow Grove transforms into a new Joint Interagency Installation. It's important to note that this concept of a Joint Interagency Installation is a new one. Willow Grove is the first entity to become a Joint Interagency Installation and we absolutely need to move in a very deliberate fashion to ensure that the best interests of our nation, our Commonwealth, and our community are carefully considered in all matters relating to the base.**

**One of the most important attributes of the proposed legislation is that it affords Horsham Township, important legal standing in this process. This base is located in Horsham Township, and Horsham officials deserve a significant role in this entire process. The legislation also gives the township a more appropriate and a higher-profile role in discerning what happens at the base.**

**The legislation being offered would ensure some of these objectives are achieved and is a good start. While we are in general agreement on the legislation and wish to see it moved forward, some issues remain to be resolved. Specific arrangements need to be worked out about items such as fire protection and public health and safety arrangements at the new base.**

**I also want to express my belief that our Commonwealth needs to do a better job than they have in working with Horsham Township and their officials in the decision-making parts of this process. Whether or not Commonwealth decision-makers agree with Horsham Township's concerns or not, Horsham Township deserves a prominent role in these discussions. Horsham Township has always been a good neighbor to the U.S. Navy, and the Navy in turn has always reciprocated. The Commonwealth, as the new landlord of the base, needs to make a commitment ensuring that the dynamics of this past relationship between the base and the township community remains the way it has been.**

**As one of two representatives of the township serving in Harrisburg, I know I will be watching closely to ensure that the concerns of Horsham Township officials are given the attention and the respect they deserve. I will also be working to ensure that the concerns of our constituents are addressed in an appropriate manner and forum. Finally, I will be working with our legislators to support and achieve passage of this legislation.**

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