



February 15, 2011

Dear Senator \_\_\_\_\_:

We are writing to express our strong opposition to Senate Amendment 4 to S 223, which would repeal the Essential Air Service program.

While over three decades have passed since the program's inception, small and rural communities do not rely any less on commercial air service than they did in 1978, when Congress promised them airline deregulation would not disconnect them from the nation's air transportation network.

Cutting Essential Air Service would serve as a deathblow to the economic health of hundreds of small communities across the nation. It is unimaginable that a business would start up in, or relocate to a community where the closest commercial airport is located over two, four, six, or even eight hours away. The loss of commercial air service at these communities would likewise crush existing businesses and would cause even greater numbers of doctors and other skilled professionals – already in short supply in rural areas – to migrate to less isolated communities.

While the consequences of cutting this program will be borne most heavily by those passengers left without air service, reducing the volume of air travel from these communities will carry negative economic consequences for the entire air transportation industry. Of the 670 U.S. airports currently receiving scheduled, commercial service, 150 of those airports receive air service *only* through the Essential Air Service program. Eliminating the program would shut down air travel to and from nearly *one quarter of our nation's commercial airports*. The economic impact on our nation's air transportation network, which provides more than 10.9 million direct U.S. jobs and serves over 750 million passengers annually, would be substantial. Moreover, eliminating the program also eliminates jobs for thousands of employees of those airports and the airlines serving them.

We understand the fiscal challenges facing our nation. Each of our organizations stands ready to assist in designing meaningful reform to increase the program's efficiency. However, eliminating Essential Air Service outright is the wrong thing to do, and now is the worst time to do it. We urge you to oppose S Amendment 4

and any other efforts to cut or eliminate this important -- indeed, *essential* -- program.

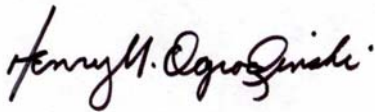
Sincerely,



Greg Principato  
President, Airports Council International- North America



Charles Barclay  
President, American Association of Airport Executives



Henry Ogrodzinski  
President & CEO, National Association of State Aviation of Officials



Roger Cohen  
President, Regional Airline Association