



CONGRESSMAN TIM BISHOP

FIRST DISTRICT -- NEW YORK

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BISHOP CALLS ON CONGRESS TO INVESTIGATE FLIGHT 800 SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS

A Decade After Tragedy, FAA Fuel Tank Safety Measure Stalled

Washington, DC – Congressman Tim Bishop sent a letter today to the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure requesting a Congressional hearing of the Federal Aviation Administration's delay in implementing safety upgrades that could avert fuel tank explosions similar to the cause of the TWA Flight 800 disaster. The upcoming ten-year anniversary of the Flight 800 crash calls attention to the FAA's failure to act on important recommendations based on the findings of the National Transportation Safety Board's lengthy investigation following the crash. Monday, July 17th is the tenth anniversary of the disaster, which claimed the lives of 230 passengers and crew.

“Ten years after the Flight 800 disaster, the FAA still has not fixed the problem. That is unacceptable to me and should be to my colleagues as well,” Bishop said, “It is long past time for Congress to assert its oversight responsibilities by investigating the FAA's delay and demand answers for the families of the victims of Flight 800. The NTSB's recommendations need to be implemented, not gathering dust on some bureaucrat's desk.”

In August of 2000, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), the independent government agency charged with investigating transportation catastrophes, determined that the explosion of Flight 800's center wing fuel tank caused the mid-flight break up of the plane. The NTSB subsequently recommended the installation of fuel tank inerting systems to correct the problem. To date, the FAA has not implemented the NTSB recommendations.

“Our constituents and the flying public deserve to know that every necessary step is being taken to ensure we address one of the most glaring vulnerabilities in aviation safety,” Bishop wrote in his letter to House leaders.

Congressman Bishop introduced the Transport Aircraft Fuel Tank Safety Act (H.R. 4174) last year, which would require the FAA to implement a final regulation to mitigate center wing fuel tank flammability in aircraft. Shortly following introduction of the legislation, the Secretary of Transportation announced that the administration was finally considering a regulation to deal with the flammability problem. No formal action has been taken since.

“The families here and abroad who have carried the burden of this tragedy for a decade deserve the closure that FAA action can provide,” Bishop stated, “I'm hopeful that we can all work together to increase the safety of the flying public.”

TWA Flight 800, which originated at JFK International Airport in New York and was bound for Paris, exploded over the south shore of Long Island, New York on July 17, 1996. The event remains one of the worst air disasters in history and led to one of the most costly and extended investigations to date.

A copy of the letter follows:

July 13, 2006

Honorable Don Young
Chairman, House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee
2165 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Young,

I request your assistance in scheduling a hearing of in the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee regarding the Federal Aviation Administration's aircraft fuel tank safety standards.

As we approach the tenth anniversary of the crash of TWA Flight 800, which claimed the lives of 230 passengers and crew, it is imperative that our committee assert its oversight responsibility in determining why the FAA has not yet implemented safety regulations to mitigate fuel tank flammability, which caused the Flight 800 disaster. Although the FAA announced a notice of proposed rule-making last November that would require aircraft manufacturers to install protective devices designed to prevent fuel tanks from exploding, both this notice and implementation of such preventative safety measures are long overdue.

As a result of advances in aircraft technology over the past decade, as well as aviation security protocols implemented since the September 11th attacks, the flying public is less at risk today than when the Flight 800 crashed in the Atlantic Ocean just south of my district on Long Island. Although the FAA has implemented some stopgap measures to improve fuel tank safety, our constituents and the flying public deserve to know that every necessary step is being taken to ensure we address one of the most glaring vulnerabilities in aviation safety.

Shortly before Secretary Mineta announced the notice of proposed rule-making last year, I introduced H.R. 4174, the Transport Aircraft Fuel Tank Safety Act, which would require the FAA to implement a final regulation to mitigate center wing fuel tank flammability in transport category aircraft. The National Transportation Safety Board first recommended this step in the wake of the Flight 800 disaster and two subsequent crashes caused by the same malfunction. In response, my legislation is a common sense approach to improving air safety and could serve as a starting point in our committee to discuss a remedy to this problem that FAA has been unable to implement on its own to date.

Thank you for your generous consideration of this request, and feel free to contact me at your convenience should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Tim Bishop
Member of Congress

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