

H.R. 1110 would amend the Federal Aviation Act to establish specific standards and prohibitions regarding the operation of supersonic aircraft. Again, the Department bill (H.R. 3400) provides for the issuance of regulations concerning the control of sonic boom and supplies all the authority that is needed in that area. We believe it would be particularly inadvisable to establish by statute specific limitations relative to the generation of sonic boom overpressures as H.R. 1110 would do. We recommend that the establishment of any technical standards of this nature be accomplished through the regulatory process to insure flexibility in adjusting such standards as advances in technology are achieved.

Three of the bills (H.R. 91, H.R. 1398 and H.R. 2819) contain provisions authorizing the Federal Government to reimburse air carriers for expenses they incur in modifying or purchasing aircraft designed to comply with Government noise regulations; airport owners or operators for costs of modifying airports to comply with Government noise regulations; and States or municipalities for costs of acquiring land surrounding airports in order to reduce the effects of noise. Another bill (H.R. 11073) amends the Federal Airport Act to permit grant-in-aid funds to be applied to projects for the control of jet aircraft-created noise in classrooms of schools in close proximity to public airports.

These bills raise a number of complex questions as to the responsibilities respecting noise control of the various parties concerned with aircraft operations. In addition, they necessitate inquiries into the benefits those parties derive from these operations, and their ability to contribute financially or otherwise to the solution of the aircraft noise problem. Among these parties are the producers of aircraft, aircraft operators, local Governments which operate airports, passengers and other users of commercial aircraft, and the Federal Government. These are questions on which the Department has made some preliminary studies, but, at this juncture, we are not prepared to make a full response to them. Before venturing further into this area, it is essential that we await further progress in study efforts now under way aimed at determining the magnitude of the noise problem in individual areas and the likely cost and effectiveness of the various ways to alleviate noise.

Finally, H.R. 1102 would make the United States liable in any case in which it is established that an easement in airspace has been taken as a result of the operation of aircraft in accordance with air traffic rules prescribed by FAA. The Department opposes enactment of H.R. 1102. We believe that, while the Federal Government can provide leadership in the campaign to control noise, particularly in certain areas such as the regulation of flight and the certification of aircraft, a heavy responsibility must continue to be assumed by the industry which conducts aircraft operations and the local jurisdictions which are served by those operations and are engaged in the regulation of local land use. In no event do we believe that the Federal Government should assume the burden of providing the financial resources to make reimbursements for property loss due to aircraft noise. We know of no rationale to justify the assumption by the Federal Government of that cost burden.

We have been advised by the Bureau of the Budget that there would be no objection to the submission of this report from the standpoint of the Administration's program.

Sincerely yours,

JOHN L. SWEENEY,
Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs.

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE,
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY,
Washington, D.C., August 17, 1967.

HON. HARLEY O. STAGGERS,
Chairman, Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce,
House of Representatives, Washington, D.C.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: Reference is made to your request to the Secretary of Defense for the views of the Department of Defense with respect to H.R.'s 91, 618, 1398, 3400, and 5461, 90th Congress, bills which concerns aircraft noise abatement regulation. The Department of the Air Force has been designated to express the views of the Department of Defense.

The Department of Defense is vitally interested in aircraft noise abatement and is presently conducting research and development related to noise reduction.