



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Daniel L. Squadron

## Squadron Joint Testimony with Congressman Jerrold Nadler Regarding The Downtown Manhattan Heliport Concessionaire Agreement

DANIEL L. SQUADRON July 11, 2016

| ISSUE: **TOURIST HELICOPTERS, STOP THE CHOP, HELICOPTER NOISE, DOWNTOWN MANHATTAN HELIPORT, HELICOPTERS**



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Our names are Congressman Jerrold Nadler and New York State Senator Daniel Squadron, and we represent, respectively, New York's 10th Congressional District and the New York State Senate's 26th District, which both contain the Downtown Manhattan Heliport (DMH)

and many of the communities affected by flights originating at DMH.

We appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony on the concession agreement for FirstFlight Heliports, LLC d/b/a Saker Aviation Service's operations at the Downtown Manhattan Heliport. As you know, we have long called to end non-essential tourist helicopter flights, and we continue to support a full ban of these flights in New York City.

It is our understanding that today's hearing governs amendments that would extend Saker Aviation Service's concessionaire agreement through April 2021, with additional short-term renewal options. Given our opposition to tourist helicopter operations, we oppose this extension of the concessionaire agreement.

Tourist helicopter flights have already been banned at heliports across the city, including the East 34th Street Heliport and the 30th Street Heliport on the West Side of Manhattan, shifting all tourist helicopter flights take-offs and landings to the Downtown Manhattan Heliport. None of the neighborhoods previously impacted by tourist flights have ever found the impact acceptable. It is similarly unacceptable in the neighborhoods from the Upper West Side to Lower Manhattan to the Brooklyn waterfront and beyond, in which the problems caused by tourist flights from DMH have been concentrated.

In February, the City made an agreement that reduced the maximum number of tourist helicopter flights allowed, ended Sunday flights and flights over land, introduced air quality monitoring, and required research into additional noise and emission reductions. Later this week, the first report required by the February agreement is expected. We look forward to reviewing this report and ensuring the operator's compliance with all provisions, and hope there will be strict enforcement of any non-compliance. As we said at the time of that agreement, reductions are an important and positive step, but an outright ban on tourist flights from DMH is still warranted. Since the February agreement went into effect, we have

continued to hear concerns from impacted community members.

Tourist flights are by definition non-essential, and have not been proven to have significant benefit for commerce or safety. However, we recognize the role of the Downtown Manhattan Heliport, for law enforcement, emergency response, and other purposes. Today, both the 30th and 34th Street heliports still operate as heliports without tourist helicopter operations. Without tourist flights, Downtown Manhattan Heliport could, and should continue to operate as well.

Ending tourist helicopter flights at the Downtown Manhattan Heliport continues to have broad support. After the February deal was announced, a broad coalition of elected officials renewed their call for a ban. Even the City itself has previously supported ending tourist helicopter operations. In its Helicopter Master Plan of 1999, it was clear that the City opposed non-essential tourist helicopter operations at City-owned facilities.

We oppose extension of any concessionaire agreement that continues to allow tourist flights. Thank you again for the opportunity to submit testimony today.