

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 21—COMMITTEE ON
LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS AND OPERATIONS

MAY 10, 1999

Referred to Committee on Transportation

SUMMARY—Expresses concern regarding proposals redefining space in which aircraft may be flown over Grand Canyon. (BDR R-1729)

FISCAL NOTE: Effect on Local Government: No.
Effect on the State or on Industrial Insurance: No.

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EXPLANATION – Matter in ***bolded italics*** is new; matter between brackets ~~omitted material~~ is material to be omitted.

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION—Expressing concern regarding proposals redefining the space in which an aircraft may be flown over the Grand Canyon.

- 1 WHEREAS, Tourism is the mainstay of the Nevada economy; and
- 2 WHEREAS, The air tour industry is an exciting and strong attraction for
- 3 visitors to Southern Nevada; and
- 4 WHEREAS, Air tours over the Grand Canyon have been a tourism
- 5 tradition for more than 70 years and this industry has maintained a strong
- 6 safety record; and
- 7 WHEREAS, Approximately 800,000 visitors from around the world
- 8 enjoyed air tours of the Grand Canyon in 1996 and 500,000 of those
- 9 visitors originated their flights in Southern Nevada; and
- 10 WHEREAS, Air tours are the only way that persons who have certain
- 11 physical disabilities can experience the grandeur of the Grand Canyon; and
- 12 WHEREAS, In 1996, a study conducted by the University of Nevada, Las
- 13 Vegas, estimated that air tourism to the Grand Canyon using Southern
- 14 Nevada air tour operators contributed more than \$374.8 million to the
- 15 Southern Nevada economy; and
- 16 WHEREAS, The study concluded that the Las Vegas Convention and
- 17 Visitors Authority generates air tour industry expenditures of \$49.8 million
- 18 each year; and
- 19 WHEREAS, The study determined that more than 142,000 foreign
- 20 visitors, which constitutes 32.4 percent of all foreign visitors, and more
- 21 than 9,000 visitors from the United States, which constitutes 23.7 percent

1 of all visitors from within the United States, would forego visits to
2 Southern Nevada if the Grand Canyon air tours were unavailable; and

3 WHEREAS, Recent economic downturns in Asia have adversely impacted
4 tourism in Southern Nevada; and

5 WHEREAS, The air tour industry provides visual access to back country
6 of the Grand Canyon including many of its most spectacular sights, and
7 without air tours, only a small minority of visitors who have the time and
8 physical ability to hike in the canyon would be afforded the opportunity to
9 appreciate these magnificent sights; and

10 WHEREAS, Air tours do not cause a permanent negative impact on the
11 fragile environment of the Grand Canyon as do some other activities; and

12 WHEREAS, In 1988, Special Federal Aviation Regulation 50-2 was
13 enacted establishing routes, altitudes and reporting requirements and as a
14 result of this legislation, noise complaints have been dramatically reduced
15 and there has been a substantial restoration of natural quiet to the Grand
16 Canyon; and

17 WHEREAS, Since the enactment of the requirements of this regulation,
18 92 percent of visitors to the park have reported that they were not adversely
19 affected by aircraft sounds, and visitors to the back country have reported
20 seeing or hearing only one or two aircraft a day; and

21 WHEREAS, The United States Forest Service concluded in 1992 that
22 there were "few adverse impacts to wilderness users" from aircraft tours
23 and that the flights did not impair the overall enjoyment of the wilderness
24 or reduce the likelihood of repeat visits; and

25 WHEREAS, A hearing held on September 2, 1998, by the House National
26 Parks and Public Lands Subcommittee disclosed that the National Park
27 Service noise analysis failed to undergo scientific modeling or peer review;
28 and

29 WHEREAS, The National Park Service disclosed on February 2, 1999, its
30 intention to redefine the threshold for substantial restoration of natural quiet
31 in the air tour air space of Grand Canyon National Park at a noticeability
32 level of 8 decibels below natural ambient air sound; and

33 WHEREAS, Air tour operators and acoustical experts conclude that this
34 higher threshold proposed by the National Park Service would virtually
35 shut down air tours in the east end air space of the Grand Canyon National
36 Park; and

37 WHEREAS, The Federal Aviation Administration now proposes to
38 conduct an environmental assessment of air routes from Las Vegas to the
39 Grand Canyon based solely on sound that could lead to further restriction
40 or capping of flights; and

41 WHEREAS, The Nevada Congressional Delegation, the Nevada
42 Commission on Tourism, the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority
43 and McCarran International Airport repeatedly have supported maintaining

1 a viable Southern Nevada air tour industry and continued air access to and
2 from Las Vegas; now, therefore, be it
3 RESOLVED BY THE SENATE AND ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF NEVADA,
4 JOINTLY, That the Nevada Legislature expresses its concern regarding any
5 proposal to redefine the space in which aircraft may be flown over the
6 Grand Canyon and urges the Congress of the United States to effect an
7 outcome for the Southern Nevada air tour industry that will protect, support
8 and sustain the viability of this significant contributor to the tourism
9 economy of the State of Nevada and the enjoyment of visitors and
10 sightseers; and be it further
11 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of the Senate prepare and transmit a copy
12 of this resolution to the Vice President of the United States as presiding
13 officer of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, each
14 member of the Nevada Congressional Delegation, the Grand Canyon Air
15 Tour Council and the United States Air Tour Association; and be it further
16 RESOLVED, That this resolution becomes effective upon passage and
17 approval.

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