



The Honorable James L. Oberstar  
Chairman  
Transportation & Infrastructure Committee  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Mica  
Ranking Member  
Transportation & Infrastructure Committee  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

April 9, 2009

Via Facsimile

Dear Chairman Oberstar and Ranking Member Mica:

Wireless communication services are critically important tools for business travelers, and they represent an important sector in our innovation and technology economy. Spending a significant time traveling by air is simply part of the job description of today's small business owner and entrepreneur. For this reason, we are concerned that some House Members are seeking to impose a ban on all wireless communications on board commercial flights without input from stakeholders and the benefit of the available data.

For 17 months now, international air carriers have now offered inflight communications services to passengers on more than 220 flights per day going to 162 destinations in 34 countries. Before banning the use of wireless telecommunications on flights, Congress should evaluate the data from this experience and the effectiveness of the applicable protocols currently in use overseas.

The U.S. passenger now spends more time than ever on commercial aircraft. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, airline delays grew longer in 2008, averaging nearly one hour. Also, the average delay for late airline flights was 57 minutes in 2008, and last year was the fourth straight year that delays have increased for travelers, according to FlightStats.com.

Inflight telecommunications will allow the U.S. business traveler to participate in a wide range of activities, change travel plans and logistics while in the air, and no longer be "out of pocket" while on board a flight. In today's ultra competitive global business climate, deals happen and commerce moves at the speed of the latest telecommunications technology— hours and even seconds count. By denying U.S. passengers the ability to stay connected while on flights, while our international counterparts are able to do so, could create a significant disadvantage for U.S. business travelers. Before making a final decision, we urge you to seek input from the business community here and abroad.

Perhaps most importantly, it has been reported that the deployment of inflight telecommunications infrastructure could result in one billion dollars in new revenue and commercial activity. Deployment of this technology could help create jobs and provide new revenue streams for air carriers, telecommunications businesses and entrepreneurs. At a time when we are all hard pressed to survive and compete economically, Congress should not block the advancement of new technology, new financial opportunity, and sources of revenue without first considering all the facts.

For these reasons, we urge Congress to direct the National Academy of Science to conduct a study on potential social and economic factors before banning the use of inflight wireless communications. We also request that the study solicit feedback and input from all stakeholders including airline professionals, businesses and business travelers, passengers, the telecommunications industry, and other appropriate groups and individuals.

Thank you for considering the views of small business.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Karen Kerrigan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Karen Kerrigan  
President & CEO

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