

Air Transport Association

September 5, 2002

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
United States Senate
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Feinstein:

With the safety of our passengers and crewmembers as our number one priority, we are writing to convey our serious concerns regarding S.2554 that would permit the use of firearms by pilots aboard commercial aircraft. As discussions continue on the merits of this subject, we stand ready to work with Congress and the Administration in an effort to reach a prudent consensus position. It must be noted, however, that while we are spending literally billions of dollars to keep dangerous weapons off of aircraft, the idea of intentionally introducing thousands of deadly weapons into the system appears to be dangerously counter-productive.

In the aftermath of the tragic events of September 11, we understand the rationale for providing crewmembers with means to defend themselves and their aircraft. However, we believe that allowing guns aboard every aircraft is ill-advised.

A variety of serious safety, technical and training issues have been raised that require answers prior to moving forward with any proposal to even consider the use of firearms by cockpit crews. To ensure the safety and security of our customers and employees, we have a duty and obligation to ask these tough questions and to have a clear understanding of the answers. Otherwise, innocent passengers and crewmembers will be killed or injured through accidental firings of weapons, or worse, their being used against crews and passengers.

We believe that the public must know what studies or testing have been conducted to determine the effects of an accidental weapon discharge in a pressurized aircraft at altitude, or discharge into a sophisticated instrument panel? How will the firearm be stowed, maintained and protected from misuse between flights, particularly when the aircraft is parked overnight or deployed in international operations? What is the process to measure the ability of armed pilots to handle a firearm in the close confines of the cockpit? Will the training program disrupt the airline's ability to operate their schedules? How often are firearms utilized by trained law enforcement officers lost, misplaced, stolen, fired accidentally or used against the officer carrying the weapon.

The Transportation Security Administration has testified that the cost to the government for the program is approximately \$850 million. In light of programs already completed and underway to secure cockpit doors, we seriously question the cost effectiveness of a program mandated in S.2554 that would impose a further burden on scarce TSA resources. Indeed, with secure cockpit doors now being further upgraded with even higher protective capabilities, the advisability of introducing dangerous and unnecessary weapons in the cockpit environment must be carefully considered.

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Until such time as validated answers to these and other questions are available, we believe that a decision to deploy firearms aboard commercial aircraft raises a serious and unnecessary risk for both passengers and crewmembers. Just as we would not introduce an aircraft into service without thorough testing, training of crewmembers and evaluating all safety measures, no one should place deadly weapons in the hands of flight crews without a thorough evaluation.

In view of these concerns, we urge you to reject calls for the introduction of thousands of deadly weapons into the cockpits of our aircraft.

Sincerely,

ATA Board of Directors



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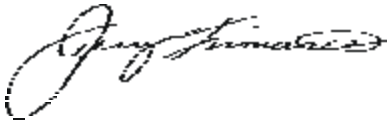
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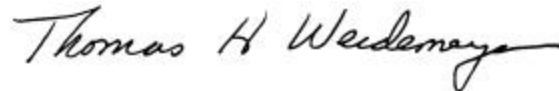
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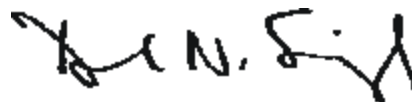
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