

Long Beach City Council Consideration of Airport Terminal Size

April 24, 2007

Comments by Felton Williams
Long Beach Unified School District Board of Education Vice President

Good evening Mayor and Councilmembers. I am Felton Williams, and I'm speaking tonight as vice president of the Board of Education for the Long Beach Unified School District. I am here to address the item of the airport modernization. It is our understanding that the airport terminal size is to be considered this evening.

I want to reiterate for you the school district's position on the airport. We have never opposed modernization of the airport. We still do not oppose modernization of the airport. We have no formal position on the project as a whole. Our interest is much narrower. We still have a problem with the EIR, which has not properly addressed the impact and potential impacts of noise on our schools, students and teachers.

Our schools and our city take great pride in the many partnerships we have. As a Board of Education, we do not relish any legal challenge that pits us against the city, yet we have had no choice but to file a lawsuit to protect the interests of our schoolchildren in this one matter. We would be remiss in our duties as Board of Education members if we did not, above all else, act in the best interests of students. Airplane noise has a definite impact on instruction in our schools.

In other cities where schools and airports coexist, the airport has recognized the potential significant impact on the children's learning environment and has provided funding to address those impacts (examples include Burbank, San Jose, Los Angeles and others). There is no such assistance in place for the children and teachers of the Long Beach Unified School District. We believe that the airport should help to pay for noise mitigation. We are not here to gouge the city. We are here to advocate for proper study and proper mitigation. This is a moral imperative that we should heed as elected officials, and it is required by law.

The school district and the city have historically had a collaborative relationship. We believe that tradition of collaboration should and will continue despite our disagreement on this one issue. Perhaps one day we will have both a modern airport, and appropriately mitigated classrooms. As Board of Education members, it's our job to take care of the classrooms and the kids.

Thank you.