



# Howard County Council

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Council Chair Jon Weinstein and Vice-Chair Calvin Ball Introduce Legislation Authorizing the Office of Law to Take Legal Action Against the FAA for Significant BWI Noise Impacts in Howard County**

### ***Letter Sent to Federal Delegation Requesting Congressional Hearings***

*Ellicott City, MD (January 3, 2017)* – Today, Howard County Council Chair Jon Weinstein and Vice-Chair Calvin Ball introduced Council Bill 8-2017 authorizing the Howard County Office of Law to take legal action against the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) related to the implementation of the NextGen system. The NextGen satellite-based air control system was launched at BWI-Marshall in April 2015. Since then, planes have been taking off in more concentrated areas and turning at lower altitudes, resulting in a significant increase in aircraft noise in Elkridge, Hanover, and parts of Columbia.

NextGen is satellite technology used for air traffic control, designed to cut down on flight times, reduce fuel consumption, reduce emissions and pollution and deliver savings to the airline industry. The FAA failed to appropriately consider the significant environmental impact of NextGen and acted arbitrarily in issuing its Finding of No Significant Impact under the National Environmental Protection Act.

“We continue to hear noise complaints from our residents and I am troubled that our federal officials remain unresponsive to our requests for a change in the NextGen program,” said Dr. Ball. “This has dragged on way too long and our constituents deserve results. Unfortunately, it has come down to legal action and this proposed bill is one more attempt to find a solution.”

“For nearly two years, all attempts to work constructively with the Maryland Aviation Administration (MAA) and FAA have been virtually ignored,” Weinstein explains. “I share our constituents’ deep frustration and I am extremely disappointed at the FAA’s complete lack of action. Their lack of communication with us since our July meeting is unacceptable and has left us with no option other than to demand legal action and a formal Congressional inquiry.”

This legislation comes on the heels of a letter that was sent to the Howard County Federal Delegation, in collaboration and with the support of Senator Chris Van Hollen, calling for immediate and formal Congressional Hearings of the actions and inactions of the FAA and MAA, regarding the NextGen system.

The letter stated, “The implementation of this program in airports across the nation shows this is not an isolated incident and has had negative impact nationwide. In service to our citizens locally and across this great nation, we respectfully request this issue be addressed at home, but also encourage

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the delegation to join with Congressional leaders from around U.S. to make sure this issue is studied to the fullest extent and the FAA is made to answer questions and truly address the issue in a public and transparent manner.”

Communities and residents across Howard County are suffering and other jurisdictions echo our cries including Montgomery County, who expressed to the FAA that the “constant overflight of aircraft [from Reagan National] is intolerable.” In addition, Senator Van Hollen joined on as a signatory to Montgomery County leaders’ letter calling the NextGen flight procedures “disastrous” and noting that the already intolerable noise worsened from narrowing and concentrating the flight paths.

According to the Competitive Enterprise Institute, “NextGen has been a slow-motion train wreck throughout its entire history, suffering from ever-increasing delays and billions of dollars in cost overruns—and it is still unclear when the promised benefits may materialize, if they ever appear at all.”

Last July, Councilman Weinstein organized a meeting at FAA’s Washington, D.C. offices. Councilmembers Ball and Weinstein joined representatives from the County administration and elected state and federal delegations to press the FAA to take steps to implement a near-term improvement to alleviate the problem, while pursuing a formal process for a permanent solution. While FAA officials pledged at the meeting to work with local elected officials, community organizations, and the Maryland Aviation Administration, to establish a collaborative working group with the ultimate goal of addressing the negative impact from NextGen, no action has been taken to date.

Numbers released by BWI-Marshall show the airport received 835 noise complaints in 2014. In 2015, that number jumped to 1,849, an increase of 121 percent. In addition to BWI-Marshall, increased noise complaints resulting from implementing NextGen technology have been reported near airports in Boston, San Francisco, San Jose, Santa Cruz, Phoenix, and New York.

Testimony on Council Bill 8-2017 will be accepted at the regularly scheduled public hearing on January 17, 2017. To sign up to testify, visit <https://apps.howardcountymd.gov/otestimony/>. If you would like to submit your testimony electronically, email [councilmail@howardcountymd.gov](mailto:councilmail@howardcountymd.gov).

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