

Statement prepared for Senator Sam Brownback
Full Commerce Committee Hearing on American-TWA and Related Transactions and the Effects of
Airline Consolidation on Competition and the Consumer
9:30 a.m.
Thursday, February 1, 2001

MR. CHAIRMAN, THANK YOU FOR HOLDING THIS HEARING ON THIS IMPORTANT ISSUE - I THINK EVERYONE NOTICED AT LAST WEEK'S CONFIRMATION HEARING OF SECRETARY NORM MINETA, THAT AVIATION ISSUES ARE AT THE FOREFRONT OF EVERYONE'S MINDS, WHETHER IT IS MERGERS AND ACQUISITIONS, DELAYS AND CONGESTION, COMPETITION AND PRICING, OR EVEN CUSTOMER SERVICE. THE CHAIRMAN AND THE NEW HEAD OF THE AVIATION SUBCOMMITTEE, SENATOR HUTCHISON, HAVE THEIR WORK CUT OUT FOR THEM IN THIS CONGRESS.

I COME FROM A RURAL STATE, WHICH HAS NO HUB AIRPORTS, AND HAS A LOT OF RURAL COMMUNITIES WITH LITTLE AIR SERVICE, OR NO AIR SERVICE AT ALL. MANY OF OUR COMMUNITIES ARE DEPENDENT ON ESSENTIAL AIR SERVICE. I SHARE MY COLLEAGUE'S CONCERNS THAT CONSOLIDATION IN THE AIRLINE INDUSTRY WILL MEAN HIGHER PRICES AND FEWER CHOICES FOR CONSUMERS. IF YOU THINK FARES ARE HIGH IN HUB AIRPORT CITIES, TRY COMING TO WICHITA, KANSAS, WHERE LAST NIGHT, THE WALK UP, ROUND TRIP, SAME DAY RETURN FARE TO DENVER RANGED FROM \$1,069 TO \$1,643, AND THE CHEAPEST FLIGHT GOES EAST TO KANSAS CITY, BEFORE GOING WEST TO DENVER. IN FAIRNESS, I MUST POINT OUT, THE WALK UP FARE BETWEEN WICHITA AND THE NUMBER ONE

DESTINATION OUT OF WICHITA, DALLAS - FORT WORTH, RANGED FROM \$349 TO \$369. BUT IF YOU THINK FARES ARE HIGH IN HUB CITIES, TRY GOING TO GOODLAND OR GREAT BEND, KANSAS WHICH HAVE LOST THEIR ESSENTIAL AIR SERVICE, AND FLYING IS NOT AN OPTION AT ALL.

BUT AS I TRAVEL MY HOME STATE, THE NUMBER ONE AVIATION ISSUE AMONG MY CONSTITUENTS IS NOT FLUFFY PILLOWS OR WHETHER THE GATE AGENT WAS HELPFUL OR NOT. MY CONSTITUENTS ARE SICK OF FLYING BECAUSE OF FLIGHT DELAYS, CANCELLATIONS AND CONGESTION AT OUR AIRPORTS. WE HAVE A CAPACITY CRISIS IN OUR NATION'S AVIATION INFRASTRUCTURE, AND MY CONSTITUENTS HAVE CAUGHT ON. THEY FLY DEFENSIVELY, AVOIDING IF AT ALL POSSIBLE CERTAIN AIRPORTS BECAUSE THEY ARE NOTORIOUS FOR DELAYS.

WE MUST INCREASE THE CAPACITY ON THE GROUND AT OUR NATION'S AIRPORTS. WE MUST BUILD MORE RUNWAYS AND BUILD THEM FASTER THAN WE ARE DOING NOW. THE NEW RUNWAY AT MEMPHIS, TOOK, WHAT, 12, 16 YEARS TO COMPLETE? THAT IS ABSURD. THE CRISIS IS HERE. IT WAS LAST SUMMER, AND IT WAS THE SUMMER BEFORE THAT, AND WE STILL HAVE DONE NOTHING ABOUT IT. I INTEND TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT, AND I LOOK FORWARD TO WORKING WITH THE PANELISTS AND MY COLLEAGUES ON THIS COMMITTEE TO SEE THAT AT LEAST THIS ONE ASPECT OF OUR NATION'S AVIATION CAPACITY CRISIS IS ADDRESSED BY THIS CONGRESS.