

Statement of Senator Jean Carnahan

Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation

Aviation Subcommittee

Hearing on Airport Delay Prevention

March 29, 2001

Madame Chairwoman, thank you for convening this hearing on this critically important subject.

I am extremely concerned about the current state of our aviation industry. In particular, the frequency of delayed flights and the corresponding rise in customer dissatisfaction are particularly troubling.

I am pleased that this Committee acted last week by sending the Airline Customer Service Improvement Act to the floor. This is an important step to begin addressing some of the factors that lead to customer dissatisfaction.

A truly comprehensive approach to satisfying customers, however, must address the real problem -- aviation delays.

A number of different factors contribute to the problem of flight delays, and unfortunately, I foresee no easy solutions.

One reason for the current delay problem is that there are simply more people flying than ever before. Today there are over 65 million flights a year carrying over 670 million total passengers. Furthermore, the FAA recently forecasted that there would be 1.2 billion passengers flying by 2012. We can only expect our delay problems to worsen as the skies become even more congested.

We must act now to address these problems. Failure to do so will only contribute to the severity of the situation in the future. I applaud Senators Hutchison and Rockefeller for their leadership on this issue.

I believe that they recognize, as I do, that a comprehensive approach will have to attack the problem on a number of fronts including scheduling, the Air Traffic Control system, and perhaps most importantly, infrastructure capacity. I look forward to working with them and the other members of this Committee to address these important concerns.