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PHPA Responds to Congressional Proposal Regarding Helicopter Noise.

Los Angeles – The Professional Helicopter Pilots Association (PHPA), based in Los Angeles and representing both private and public helicopter pilots and supporters is responding to proposed federal legislation co-sponsored by U.S. Congressman Howard Berman (CA28), Brad Sherman (CA27), and Henry Waxman (CA30) which is aimed at the helicopter industry in Los Angeles County. Since the beginning of its existence, the PHPA has had a long standing commitment to its Fly Neighborly, Safety, and Community Relations programs.

President Larry Welk contacted Congressman Berman's office in Washington D.C. and informed them about the PHPA and Helicopter Association International (HAI) and the resources they have at their disposal. He emphasized that the PHPA stands ready to provide information, expertise, and facts regarding the helicopter operations in the Los Angeles area.

For four decades since 1967, PHPA members have conducted helicopter missions within the L.A. area that serve the needs of the community, such as local law enforcement, emergency medical services, aerial firefighting, utility construction & maintenance, as well as support of the business community. The PHPA, along with other leaders in the helicopter industry, have always made safety the number one priority. With the resultant effect that over the past 30 years, Los Angeles helicopter operations have had fewer safety incidents over any other aviation form of transportation.

The helicopter industry has gone above and beyond compliance with all regulations. Working voluntarily with the FAA and other regulatory agencies, PHPA developed operating guidelines to be utilized by public service and media helicopter operators for use when multiple aircraft are flying over a particular event. These guidelines have enhanced safety and streamlined communications between law enforcement, ground crews, and media while taking into consideration the impact on the underlying community. The value of these guidelines is demonstrated by the fact that they have become a template for other cities across the nation.

The PHPA and the helicopter industry continually work with the FAA to update best practices, including Fly Neighborly flight routes and altitudes over the freeways and major highways. PHPA actively solicits any suggestions from government leaders or members of the community to find ways to improve relationships between helicopter operators and the communities they fly over. In addition to operators' noise-mitigating flight procedures, the helicopter manufacturers are continually seeking ways to improve the aircraft in order to reduce the exterior noise levels.

As a part of the industry's Fly Neighborly program that was created in 1981 (and has been consistently updated since), PHPA has been proactive in its approach to work with the communities that we fly over. Pilots attend seminars on how to "fly neighborly" and flight instructors teach new pilots the importance of these techniques. The PHPA has established a 24/7 helicopter noise hotline that community members may call at (213) 891-3636 to record a message. The PHPA developed a "Helicopter Noise Hotspot" data collection system to inform its members regarding specific noise sensitive areas. PHPA and its

members take the concerns of the community very seriously and work diligently to resolve any issues that may arise.

These tools, along with industry established guidelines, enable helicopter pilots to work with the surrounding communities. Pilots and operators are very sensitive to noise concerns and have been successful in making concerted efforts to address them. A recent example is an on-going effort among the Torrance Airport neighbors, the FAA, and the PHPA to modify the helicopter flight paths from the airport. This type of cooperative interaction will result in acceptable noise abatement measures that will not compromise aviation safety.

We caution lawmakers to give serious consideration with regard to potential unintended consequences associated with legislative initiatives that would affect the safe and efficient use of the airspace. Such legislative acts can threaten the safety of those in the aircraft as well as those on the ground. By imposing restrictions on the available airspace, altitudes, and routing for helicopters, predicated upon no other consideration than noise, high intensity aircraft congestion can be created within confined airspace layers. This will result in conflicts not only between helicopters, but also between airplanes that are operating to and from the various airports or transiting the area. This could substantially decrease safety when many different aircraft types, which travel at different speeds, are no longer separated but are pushed closer together in the airspace. Careful consideration must be given to avoid forcing the helicopters over other communities which may be even more sensitive to noise than the existing operating areas.

As we work together in long-established relationships with multiple public organizations to resolve issues and mitigate aircraft noise, we strongly urge lawmakers to contact us when encountering questions and to work with the established expertise in our industry to better define the problems and find solutions.

We caution against imposing new regulatory and penalty requirements for helicopters before having factual data that determines the actual problem and its magnitude in addition to the effect of the proposed regulations. Placing restriction on flight operations should only be addressed after an appropriate study and analysis of the issues has taken place.

In working together and utilizing the resources we have already created, we can resolve differences without sacrificing safety. The helicopter industry, the FAA, and affected communities have collaborated effectively toward this goal for decades. We want to hear the community concerns and issues. We look forward to working with them on this important matter.

The PHPA is an organization working with media helicopter operators and public service agencies, including fire and law enforcement agencies, in promoting ways to keep the skies safe in the Los Angeles region

Helicopter Association International is an organization created to advance the international helicopter community by providing programs that enhance safety, encourage professionalism, and economic viability while promoting the unique contributions vertical flight offers society.

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