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TO: Distribution
 FROM: Delanne Bernier *DB*
 SUBJECT: Airliner Cabin Air Quality Hearing

DATE: September 19, 1986

SUMMARY:

The Aviation Subcommittee of the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee held a hearing today on cabin air quality which focused on the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) study released in August. The NAS proposed smoking ban on all commercial, domestic carriers generated most, but not all of the discussions that ensued.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) representative testified that because a joint working group comprised of Secretary of Transportation Dole's staff and FAA staff are currently giving the NAS study careful review, a transmittal to Congress of the Secretary's recommendations would most likely not be forthcoming until the beginning of the 100th Congress.

The three Subcommittee members present -- Chairman Kassebaum (R-KS), Exon (D-NE) and Inouye (D-HI) -- focused on the smoking issue differently. Inouye was extremely troubled by smoking on board aircraft and heartily promoted its ban. On the other hand, Exon, smoking his pipe throughout the hearing, was not as informed on the issue in general and promoted aircraft redesign to further segregate smokers and non-smokers for accommodation all around. He claimed he would readily pay a few dollars more per ticket to smoke in peace. Kassebaum was cautious in expressing anything but a general concern for collecting further data on the issue of air quality as a whole.

Testimony from the three panels ranged on the smoking issue from support for the NAS smoking ban proposal to attacks on the credibility of the NAS study in this regard. Highlights of the testimony and questions and answers follow.

PANEL 1:

Mr. Paul F. Halfpenny, Vice Chairman, Committee on Airliner Cabin Air Quality, National Research Council, National Academy of Sciences.

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Halfpenny briefly outlined the findings of the NAS study in the areas of air quality, fire safety and other health risks such as pressurization and cosmic radiation.

Mr. M.C. Craig Beard, Director, Office of Airworthiness, accompanied by Dr. Jon L. Jordan, Deputy Federal Air Surgeon, Federal Aviation Administration.

Beard had no other statement than the already mentioned procedure for the NAS study review and transmittal to Congress.

Q & A

Inouye asked Halfpenny if increased ventilation would be an acceptable alternative to a smoking ban. Halfpenny said not with the current design of aircraft. Inouye then asked a series of questions regarding the cost of improved ventilation. Halfpenny estimated \$3.00-\$4.00 per ticket for fuel costs alone. In his questioning of Beard, Inouye was critical of the FAA for not having collected data on aircraft air quality.

Kassebaum wanted to know what database was used to evaluate smoking. Halfpenny said that discussions were held, with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regarding passive smoking. Kassebaum was concerned that if no good data was taken from outside the smoking zone then isn't the proposed ban a "broad-based assumption?"

PANEL 2:

Mr. Gabriel Phillips, Executive Vice President, Air Transport Association.

In regards to smoking on board aircraft, ATA took no stand on the medical basis, but Phillips voiced serious concerns if a ban was enacted, based on lack of data and discrimination against air travel.

Ms. Tulinda Deegan, Vice President, Regional Airline Association.

Deegan also took no position on the medical aspects of in-flight smoking and generally discussed the composition of her association.

Mr. Bernard C. Hainline, Chief Engineer, Airframe Systems Technology, Boeing Commercial Airplane Company.

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Hainline stated that today's aircraft meet and exceed safety standards and that cabin air quality should not be judged in contrast to outside air.

Q & A

Again, Kassebaum asked if ATA or AIA had collected data or done estimates of costs for better ventilation. Answers were negative.

Exon proceeded to discuss that he's a pipe smoker but has learned to fly without smoking. He wanted to know if the crew were also restricted with regards to smoking. Exon was also curious if airlines have studied having a very separate smoking "room" or area. Hainline answered no and that the airlines like to have a lot of flexibility.

When Inouye asked about the proposed cigarette ban, Phillips said that the current system accommodates smokers and non-smokers and he would like to see this maintained. Inouye asked how he could feel this way in light of the Surgeon General's findings and warnings. Phillips said that "people smoke at their peril."

PANEL 3:

Mr. Matthew H. Finucane, Director of Air Safety and Health, accompanied by Ms. Norva Achenbaugh, Chairperson, Health Committee, Association of Flight Attendants.

Ms. Achenbaugh gave impassioned testimony regarding flight attendants' "fear for our health" and fear that the FAA will do nothing of substance.

Mr. Peter L. Trask, President, Aviation Safety and Health Association.

Trask founded ASHA for educational purposes and sharply criticized the NAS study as a "misinterpreted directive." He claimed that the smoking issue can easily be resolved by an airline turning on all air packs. ASHA wants to accommodate smokers, especially to avoid clandestine smoking in bathrooms. Trask estimated that a DC 10 flight to Hawaii would cost only \$1.00 per ticket more if all air packs were in utilization. Trask also suggested that NAS should do random aircraft testing and that airlines should comply.

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Q & A

Inouye asked which airlines refused to comply with the NAS previous request and it appears that United was the only airline willing to go along but not alone. When asked about the smoking ban, Finucane endorsed it with only a small reservation with respect to long flights and clandestine smoking that might occur.

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