

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Rep. Harry Mitchell today voted for H.R. 2881, the Federal Aviation Administration Reauthorization Act. The House approved the bill by a vote of 265 to 151.

“Air travel has become less convenient and less comfortable,” said Mitchell, a member of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure’s Subcommittee on Aviation. “Consumer complaints are up, on-time performance is down, and people are spending more and more time sitting on the tarmac. This bill will make some much needed improvements.”

Among the improvements, H.R. 2881 would:

- Require the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to convene schedule reduction meetings with air carriers if excessive operations at certain hours are likely to adversely impact national or regional airspace.
- Establish civil penalties for air carriers who fail to develop and abide by contingency plans for excessive onboard delays. Plans must address water availability as well as the ability for passengers to deplane.
- Require the Department of Transportation’s Inspector General to review flight delays and cancellations.
- Accelerate the implementation of the Next Generation Air Transportation System (NextGen), which will modernize our nation’s Air Traffic Control system by transitioning from a radar-based to a satellite-based system.
- Provide \$15.8 billion for Airport Improvement Program which funds infrastructure improvements such as runways, taxiways, and runways, safety and emergency equipment as well as noise abatement and land purchase projects.
- Provide \$570 million to increase the number of aviation safety inspectors by more than one-third by 2011 and \$42 million for runway incursion reduction programs.

The FAA estimates that airlines will carry more than 1 billion passengers by 2015, up from approximately 740 million in 2006. Yet, air travel continues to frustrate many travelers. According to the Bureau of Transportation Statistics, more than a quarter of flights from January through July 2007 arrived late. [Source: [Bureau of Transportation Statistics](#) ]

According to the Washington Post, “Air travelers had another rough month in July: More than 30 percent of flights were delayed or canceled, according to data released yesterday by the federal government.” [Source: [Washington Post](#) , Sept. 7, 2007]

“This bill won’t cure everything that’s wrong with our system,” said Mitchell. “Ultimately we’re going to have to increase capacity, and we need to continue to work on that. But today’s bill will definitely improve our system.”