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# HOUSE RESOLUTION

URGING VARIOUS GOVERNMENT ENTITIES TO DEVELOP, UPDATE, AND  
INTRODUCE POLICIES RELATED TO HELICOPTER AIR TOURS AT THE  
STATE AND NATIONAL LEVEL.

1 WHEREAS, the most popular helicopter tour destination on  
2 the island of Hawai'i is Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park, which  
3 recently celebrated its one hundredth anniversary; and  
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5 WHEREAS, Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park is managed by the  
6 Director of the National Park Service, which is a bureau of the  
7 United States Department of the Interior, and has more non-  
8 essential tour helicopter overflights than any other individual  
9 park in the nation; and  
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11 WHEREAS, in 2015, 14,630 flights within Hawai'i Volcanoes  
12 National Park were reported by the helicopter industry; and  
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14 WHEREAS, as one of only three national parks that collects  
15 air tour fees, Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park collected \$356,850  
16 in air tour fees in 2014; and  
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18 WHEREAS, as of September 2016, up to fourteen helicopter  
19 tour companies operated within Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park  
20 under interim operating authority; and  
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22 WHEREAS, helicopter noise as a result of commercial air  
23 tour flights over residential areas in the east Hawai'i region of  
24 the island of Hawai'i has reached an unprecedented level in  
25 recent years; and  
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27 WHEREAS, residents in Hāmākua, Hilo, Mountain View, Puna,  
28 Volcano, and Ka'ū have continued to raise issues of overflights,  
29 noise complaints, and safety with the state Department of  
30 Transportation, Honolulu Flight Standards District Office of the  
31 Federal Aviation Administration, and air tour helicopter  
32 operators; and



1 WHEREAS, the National Parks Overflight Act of 1987 requires  
2 a minimum altitude of five thousand feet above ground level over  
3 any national park; and  
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5 WHEREAS, due to the absence of a congressionally mandated  
6 Air Tour Management Plan, some tour operators operating within  
7 Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park are allowed to descend to five  
8 hundred feet above ground level and as low as two hundred feet  
9 above ground level over razorback ridges; and  
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11 WHEREAS, these operations pose not just a noise issue but a  
12 flight-safety issue, as well; and  
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14 WHEREAS, the Federal Aviation Administration has  
15 jurisdiction over all airspace in the country and has the power  
16 to regulate all aspects of civil aviation; and  
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18 WHEREAS, in 2000, the National Environmental Policy Act, in  
19 conjunction with the National Parks Air Tour Management Act of  
20 2000, required an Air Tour Management Plan to be implemented at  
21 various national parks throughout the country; and  
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23 WHEREAS, the objective of an Air Tour Management Plan is  
24 "to develop acceptable and effective measures to mitigate or  
25 prevent the significant adverse impacts, if any, of commercial  
26 air tour operations upon the natural and cultural resources,  
27 visitor experiences and tribal lands"; and  
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29 WHEREAS, in 2004, the Federal Aviation Administration and  
30 National Park Service requested public comment on an Air Tour  
31 Management Plan Environmental Assessment relating to managing  
32 commercial air tour overflights at Hawai'i Volcanoes National  
33 Park; and  
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35 WHEREAS, in 2005, the project was upgraded to an  
36 Environmental Impact Statement, and the Federal Aviation  
37 Administration published a notice of opportunity for commercial  
38 air tour operators granted interim operating authority to review  
39 and self-correct annual authorizations; and  
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41 WHEREAS, in 2007, a planning team composed of staff from  
42 the Federal Aviation Administration, National Park Service, and  
43 Volpe National Transportation Systems Center began work on



1 preliminary alternatives for air tour operations over Hawai'i  
2 Volcanoes National Park; and

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4 WHEREAS, in 2008, Federal Aviation Administration and  
5 National Park Service staff met with Hawai'i air tour operators,  
6 and acoustic monitoring of three sites at Hawai'i Volcanoes  
7 National Park was conducted; and

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9 WHEREAS, in 2011, a preliminary draft Air Tour Management  
10 Plan for Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park was published,  
11 identifying five alternatives for public comment, and three  
12 open-house public meetings on the draft plan were held in April  
13 2011, in Volcano, Pahoehoe, and Na'alehu; and

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15 WHEREAS, seven years later, in 2018, there is still no  
16 final Air Tour Management Plan for Hawai'i Volcanoes National  
17 Park; and

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19 WHEREAS, in addition, after more than sixteen years, no Air  
20 Tour Management Plan for any national park in the nation has  
21 been completed; and

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23 WHEREAS, consequently, the only rules that govern  
24 helicopter and fixed-wing air tours over the airspace of the  
25 Hawaiian Islands is the Hawai'i Air Tour Common Procedures  
26 Manual, a Federal Aviation Administration document that was  
27 issued in 2008; and

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29 WHEREAS, the Hawai'i Air Tour Common Procedures Manual  
30 covers rules over all islands and air tour operators that have  
31 been granted interim operating authority; and

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33 WHEREAS, this manual is nearly ten years old, and its rules  
34 and prescribed altitudes for overflights over land are unclear;  
35 and

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37 WHEREAS, in 2010, the United States Census Bureau reported  
38 that the island of Hawai'i, particularly east Hawai'i, was the  
39 fastest-growing region in the State; and

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41 WHEREAS, the population of Puna has reached forty-five  
42 thousand residents, and the majority of air tour overflights



1 transit over these residential areas on their way to Hawai'i  
2 Volcanoes National Park on a daily basis; and  
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4 WHEREAS, furthermore, when air tours depart Hawai'i  
5 Volcanoes National Park, they typically fly a route toward the  
6 waterfall attractions in North Hilo, traveling over Volcano,  
7 Mountain View, Waiākea-Uka, Kaumana, North Hilo, Hāmākua, and  
8 Honoka'a; and  
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10 WHEREAS, it is essential to achieve a balance between  
11 residents and the tour industry that respects the peace and  
12 serenity that all residents in east Hawaii should be able to  
13 enjoy; and  
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15 WHEREAS, the visitors who travel from around the world to  
16 Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park should also be able to enjoy that  
17 same peace and tranquility as well as the precious ecosystems  
18 and wildlife that exist in Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park; now,  
19 therefore,  
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21 BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the  
22 Twenty-ninth Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session  
23 of 2018, that the respective government entities at the state  
24 and national level are urged to develop, update, and introduce  
25 policies related to helicopter air tours; and  
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27 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Federal Aviation  
28 Administration is urged to complete the Air Tour Management Plan  
29 for Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park, Haleakala, and other  
30 designated national parks throughout the nation; and  
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32 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the United States Department of  
33 Transportation, Federal Aviation Administration, and Honolulu  
34 Flight Standards District Office of the Federal Aviation  
35 Administration are urged to update the nearly decade-old Hawai'i  
36 Air Tour Common Procedures Manual; and  
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38 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Governor, Director of  
39 Transportation, General Aviation Officer of the Department of  
40 Transportation, and Honolulu Flight Standards District Office of  
41 the Federal Aviation Administration are urged to work with  
42 community stakeholders and the local helicopter tour industry to  
43 update air tour flight paths to include a variety of recommended



1 routes, including off-shore routes; altitudes; reporting  
2 procedures; and noise mitigation operations that can alleviate  
3 helicopter noise pollution, while also providing the highest  
4 level of safety for helicopter tour operators; and  
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6 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Hawai'i Congressional  
7 delegation is urged to introduce legislation addressing  
8 helicopter tour operations and noise pollution surrounding  
9 America's highly populated cities, towns, and communities; and  
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11 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Hawai'i air tour operators are  
12 urged to meet with community stakeholders once a quarter to work  
13 together to address concerns related to noise complaints and  
14 safety issues; and  
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16 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Hawai'i air tour operators are  
17 urged to operate helicopter air tours no earlier than sunrise  
18 and no later than sunset on normal business days and no earlier  
19 than one hour after sunrise and one hour before sunset on  
20 weekends and holidays, as published by the United States Naval  
21 Observatory on its website for Honolulu; and  
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23 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this  
24 Resolution be transmitted to the United States Secretary of  
25 Transportation, each member of Hawai'i's Congressional  
26 delegation, Administrator of the Federal Aviation  
27 Administration, Deputy Director of the National Park Service,  
28 Manager of the Honolulu Flight Standards District Office of the  
29 Federal Aviation Administration, Governor, Director of  
30 Transportation, General Aviation Officer of the Department of  
31 Transportation, and Hawaii Helicopter Association.

