
SENATE CONCURRENT 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



1 Federal Aviation Administration, and air tour helicopter
2 operators; and

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4 WHEREAS, the National Parks Overflight Act of 1987 requires
5 a minimum altitude of five thousand feet above ground level
6 altitude over any national park; and

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8 WHEREAS, due to the absence of a congressionally mandated
9 Air Tour Management Plan, some tour operators operating within
10 Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park are allowed to descend to five
11 hundred feet above ground level and as low as two hundred feet
12 above ground level over razorback ridges; and

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14 WHEREAS, these operations pose not just a noise issue, but
15 a flight-safety issue, as well; and

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17 WHEREAS, the Federal Aviation Administration has
18 jurisdiction over all airspace in the country and has the power
19 to regulate all aspects of civil aviation; and

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21 WHEREAS, in 2000, the National Environmental Policy Act, in
22 conjunction with the National Parks Air Tour Management Act of
23 2000, required an Air Tour Management Plan to be implemented at
24 various national parks throughout the country; and

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26 WHEREAS, the objective of an Air Tour Management Plan is
27 "to develop acceptable and effective measures to mitigate or
28 prevent the significant adverse impacts, if any, of commercial
29 air tour operations upon the natural and cultural resources,
30 visitor experiences and tribal lands"; and

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32 WHEREAS, in 2004, the Federal Aviation Administration and
33 National Park Service requested public comment on an Air Tour
34 Management Plan Environmental Assessment relating to managing
35 commercial air tour overflights at Hawai'i Volcanoes National
36 Park; and

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38 WHEREAS, in 2005, the project was upgraded to an
39 Environmental Impact Statement, and the Federal Aviation
40 Administration published a notice of opportunity for commercial
41 air tour operators granted interim operating authority to review
42 and self-correct annual authorizations; and



1 WHEREAS, in 2007, a planning team composed of staff from
2 the Federal Aviation Administration, National Park Service, and
3 Volpe National Transportations Systems Center began work on
4 preliminary alternatives for air tour operations over Hawai'i
5 Volcanoes National Park; and

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

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12 WHEREAS, in 2011, a preliminary draft Air Tour Management
13 Plan for Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park was published,
14 identifying five alternatives for public comment, and three
15 open-house public meetings on the draft plan were held in April
16 2011, in Volcano, Paho, and Na'alehu; and

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

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

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

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

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36 WHEREAS, this manual is nearly ten years old, and its rules
37 and prescribed altitudes for overflights over land are unclear;
38 and



1 WHEREAS, in 2010, the United States Census Bureau reported
2 that the island of Hawai'i, particularly east Hawai'i, was the
3 fastest-growing region in the State; and
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5 WHEREAS, the population of Puna has reached forty-five
6 thousand residents, and the majority of air tour overflights
7 transit over these residential areas on their way to Hawai'i
8 Volcanoes National Park on a daily basis; and
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10 WHEREAS, furthermore, when air tours depart Hawai'i
11 Volcanoes National Park, they typically fly a route toward the
12 waterfall attractions in North Hilo, traveling over Volcano,
13 Mountain View, Waiākea-Uka, Kaumana, North Hilo, Hāmākua, and
14 Honoka'a; and
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16 WHEREAS, it is essential to achieve a balance between
17 residents and the tour industry that respects the peace and
18 serenity that all residents in east Hawaii should be able to
19 enjoy; and
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21 WHEREAS, visitors who travel from around the world to
22 Hawai'i Volcano National Park should also be able to enjoy that
23 same peace and tranquility as well as the precious ecosystems
24 and wildlife that exist in Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park; now,
25 therefore,
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27 BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Twenty-ninth
28 Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2018, the
29 House of Representatives concurring, that the respective
30 government entities at the state and national level are urged to
31 develop, update, and introduce policies related to helicopter
32 air tours; and
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34 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Federal Aviation
35 Administration is urged to complete the Air Tour Management Plan
36 for Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park, Haleakala, and other
37 designated national parks throughout the nation; and
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39 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the United States Department of
40 Transportation, Federal Aviation Administration, and Honolulu



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

