

## Chairman Mica's Statement

Today the Subcommittee will hear testimony on a locally initiated and locally approved "agreement" that seeks to change and eventually eliminate the long-standing Wright Amendment.

As most of us know, the Wright Amendment has restricted commercial air passenger service out of Dallas Love Field for over three decades.

We will examine the terms of a June 15th compromise reached by the Cities of Dallas and Fort Worth, Texas, and the affected airlines, American and Southwest, which, among other things, would lift existing geographic restrictions on commercial air service at Love Field after eight years, in 2014.

The Wright Amendment, as modified by Congress over the years, currently restricts commercial air service out of Love Field to cities in Texas and eight surrounding states.

Enacted in 1979, the Wright Amendment was essentially a legislative compromise crafted by the Cities of Dallas and Fort Worth, Texas; Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport (DFW), Southwest Airlines, and others.

The Wright Amendment was intended to end a long-standing legal dispute over Southwest's desire to provide interstate service out of Love Field and at the same time help spur growth at the then-new regional airport, DFW.

In my 13-years in Congress, I have been a strong advocate and defender of public policy that promotes free markets and economic deregulation.

I have long believed that the Wright Amendment, along with other existing barriers, should be repealed. These types of restrictions, in my opinion, constitute undue federal interference with the market's ability to reflect consumer preferences.

Because the Wright Amendment was locally generated many years ago, in a different time and circumstance, it is fitting that its unraveling is now being generated in a different time and under different circumstances by a locally generated agreement.

It is clearly in the best interest of consumers for the invisible hand of the marketplace, not the heavy hands of Congress or federal bureaucrats, to set air fares and service options.

We should remove this barrier as soon as we can and we should not stop here. As part of next year's FAA reauthorization legislation we should address other onerous, anti-competitive service restrictions that are currently on the books and eliminate any remaining federal laws and regulations that prohibit airlines from serving the routes sought by competitive carriers and the traveling public.

As I suggested earlier, I would prefer to see the Wright Amendment repealed immediately; however, the political reality is that without the Love Field agreement, today being considered here, the 35-year-old Cold War waged by the affected cities, airlines and communities will continue indefinitely.

By ultimately eliminating one of the most significant remaining barriers to domestic aviation competition – albeit in eight years -- the Wright Amendment compromise could help set the stage for the complete deregulation of our domestic aviation system for the benefit of consumers and communities across the United States.

Before legislation to implement some of the terms of the agreement can be crafted, it is incumbent upon this panel to ensure that safety implications of any increased operations in the airspace around Love Field and DFW airports be addressed.

I must point out that some have suggested this agreement only benefits two airlines and is anti-competitive. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses this afternoon on these particular matters as well.

Finally, I want to commend my colleagues from the Texas congressional delegation, along with the mayors of Dallas and Fort Worth, and the management of American Airlines and Southwest, for coming together and crafting a compromise.