



OFFICE OF CONGRESSMAN RON KLEIN
FLORIDA'S 22ND CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

CONTACT: 202-225-3026

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Klein Applauds House Committee for Holding Airline Safety Hearing

Washington, DC – U.S. Representative Ron Klein (FL-22) today applauded the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and its chairman, Rep. James Oberstar of Minnesota, for holding timely hearings on airline safety.

Oberstar chaired a hearing today investigating what were termed “critical lapses” by the Federal Aviation Administration, which is charged with overseeing airline safety.

“Since first arriving in Congress, I have consistently pressed the FAA to make passenger safety their highest priority,” Klein said. “Evidently, that message hasn’t gotten through. In an industry where the smallest lapse can mean the difference between life and death, stringent oversight is an absolute necessity. I commend Chairman Oberstar for calling today’s hearing.”

Klein authored a letter to acting FAA administrator Robert Sturgell on March 18, calling for an immediate investigation into a series of deadly crashes involving Kemper Aviation, a company based at a Lantana airfield. Under pressure from Members of Congress and others, Kemper Aviation voluntarily surrendered its pilot school certificate.

Klein also announced last month that at his request, the Chairman of the Aviation Subcommittee of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, Representative Jerry Costello (IL-12), will travel to South Florida in the coming months to investigate the Kemper crashes and FAA response.

“I am pleased that one of the foremost aviation experts in Congress will be traveling to South Florida to investigate the air safety crisis that has developed in our area,” Klein said. “One fatal crash would be a human tragedy, but we have seen three deadly incidents related to the same company in a matter of mere months. This speaks to a more serious problem.”

Investigators with the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee found that Southwest and other airlines had developed a “cozy relationship” with the FAA inspectors who were charged with certifying that the aircraft were safe to fly. Today’s hearing was a result of that investigation, and was titled “Critical Lapses in FAA Safety Oversight of Airlines: Abuses of Regulatory Partnership Programs.”

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