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Congressman James Oberstar Calls On Transportation Secretary Mineta
To Review Airline Which Operates On A Specific Schedule

Washington, DC - In an important step forward in his fight to shut down Indigo Airlines, a so-called charter service that in actuality offers scheduled service from Chicago Midway Airport to Teterboro Airport, Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ9) has secured the support of a key transportation official in Congress who presides over the 75 member committee that writes the nation's aviation laws. After discussing the matter with Rothman, Congressman James Oberstar (D-MN8), who has served in Congress for more than 28 years and who is the Ranking Member of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, yesterday wrote to Transportation Secretary Norm Mineta, asking him to review Indigo's operations into and out of Teterboro.

"I am very pleased and grateful that such a well-respected and powerful Member of Congress, Congressman James Oberstar, has joined my fight to shut down Indigo Airlines. Congressman Oberstar shares my concern that Indigo poses a safety risk and threatens to change the nature of Teterboro Airport from a general aviation facility to a commercial one," Rothman said. "Congressman Oberstar has a great deal of knowledge and decades of experience in dealing with aviation issues across the country. I hope that having Congressman Oberstar's support will push the Department of Transportation to thoroughly examine Indigo's Teterboro operations."

Rothman has called on the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to uphold the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey's (PA) longtime ban on scheduled service, while also calling on the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) to stop Indigo's service because of security concerns. Indigo offers tickets to random customers over the phone and Internet, and because it operates under the guise of a "charter" aircraft, its passengers are not subject to the rigorous security checks mandated by Congress at all major airports in the United States. During a hearing of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation held earlier this month, Rothman, who is a member of that panel, questioned FAA Administrator Marion Blakey as to why her agency has allowed Indigo to continue its operations at Teterboro. Blakey simply responded by saying that Indigo's operations were still under review as a result of Rothman bringing it to her attention.

In his letter, Oberstar wrote that, "My concern about this service is that although Indigo/Airserv (Indigo's sister company) claims to be an on-demand charter service, it advertises four daily round trips between Midway and Teterboro on a specific schedule...While I realize that this may indeed be permissible under the Department's current public charter rules, I am troubled by the fact that Indigo/AirServ can legally hold out a schedule to the public like a regular airline, but it need not operate under the more demanding [safety] regulations."

"Indigo threatens to turn Teterboro Airport into a Newark Airport, with jumbo jets flying in and out every minute filled with passengers and cargo which have not been subjected to the thorough security screenings conducted at our nation's major airports," Rothman said. "Indigo's scheduled service has got to stop because the present setting is too dangerous to our national security and too detrimental to the quality of life for the people of Northern New Jersey."

Rothman pledged to continue his fight against Indigo next week when Secretary Mineta is scheduled to testify before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation.

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[Go back](#)

