



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Daniel L. Squadron

Manhattan and Brooklyn Pols Call for Total Ban on Tourist Helicopters from Manhattan Air Corridors

DANIEL L. SQUADRON October 5, 2011

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NEW YORK, NY – Today, Congressman Jerrold Nadler, State Senator Daniel Squadron, Assemblywoman Joan Millman, and Councilmembers Brad Lander, Steve Levin, and Gale Brewer – longtime advocates for safety in New York’s local airspace – asserted the need for a complete ban on all tourist helicopters from Manhattan’s dangerous air corridors, including the city’s rivers and harbors. After yesterday’s tragedy involving a private sightseeing helicopter, which follows years of other preventable accidents and tragedies, the elected officials demanded an immediate overhaul of the city’s failed helicopter policy. For years, advocates and officials have worked to abate the serious and detrimental effects helicopters pose to the quality of life for New York residents, businesses, and visitors.

“Yet another terrible tragedy involving a helicopter should send us a clear message in flashing neon lights,” said Nadler. “Sightseeing and nonessential helicopters are dangerous, unnecessary, and not worth it. We have been calling for more oversight of our air corridors for years, with only modest improvements to assuage our fears. Let us once and for all ban these helicopters from Manhattan’s and Brooklyn’s dangerous air corridors. It shouldn’t take more senseless tragedy to come to this obvious conclusion.”

“Yesterday’s tragedy is another clear sign: nonessential helicopters in Manhattan don’t make sense for passengers, pilots, or local residents,” said Squadron. “My colleagues and I have long called for better regulation of helicopters in New York. There are still many questions about yesterday’s flight. The fact that this helicopter was a privately-run tour from a heliport that was not supposed to run tours shows that today’s regulations don’t work. Simply put, nonessential flights in and out of Manhattan pose too great a risk.”

“Yesterday’s unfortunate accident again demonstrates the urgent need to immediately end tourist helicopter tours,” said Millman. “We have witness too many incidents. The City claims these tours generate needed funds, but at what price! Our sympathy for the Nicholson family who lost their daughter Sonia Marra Nicholson in this horrific crash.”

“Yesterday’s tragic event underscores that fact that in New York, the skies are needed for police and for news – and not tourism helicopters,” said Brewer. “I commend the Economic Development Cooperation for their continued efforts to reduce the number of low-flying rogue tour helicopters. While some of these tour companies have adhered to the new rules, it is clear that this problem will not be resolved until tour helicopters are completely restricted from flying over Manhattan.”

“Yesterday’s accident was a horrific and unnecessary tragedy,” said Levin. “My deepest condolences go out to all those who were affected by the accident. As our communities have been saying for years, sightseeing and other nonessential helicopters are not just nuisances, they are dangerous. It is time for the city to create a real helicopter policy that protects the safety of both New Yorkers and the millions of tourists who visit our city every year. It is time for a total ban of nonessential helicopters.”

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