



FROM THE OFFICE OF REPRESENTATIVE
DEREK KILMER

Representing Washington's 6th District

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CONTACT: Tim Biba
(202) 754-2092

Kilmer, Washington National Guard and Port Angeles Leaders Applaud FAA's Decision to Fully Fund Vital Port Angeles Runway

Kilmer: "This runway is vital to our region's ability to respond to emergencies, and is a major driver of economic development."

Major General Bret Daugherty: "During a Cascadia Subduction Zone event, the Fairchild Airport in Port Angeles will be a crucial asset."

Port Commission President Colleen McAleer: "Our airport is vital to the safety and well-being of all county residents and visitors, and we look forward to working with the FAA and Representative Kilmer to protect this important regional asset into the future"

PORT ANGELES, Wash.— After listening to the concerns of Representative Derek Kilmer (D-WA), the state's emergency managers, and the Port of Port Angeles's Commissioners, the Federal Aviation Administration has issued a final decision to continue funding to maintain the current runway at the [William R. Fairchild International Airport](#). The FAA had previously considered reducing this funding, which would have left the Port with two bad options: either reduce the airport's 5,000-foot runway to 3,850 feet, or pay the bill to maintain the other 1,150 feet using only local funds, a potentially prohibitively-expensive cost.

"In rural regions like ours, peace of mind comes by knowing that the government has the infrastructure to get help to us quickly in the event of a disaster. I applaud the FAA for doing the right thing and funding the full runway in Port Angeles," Rep. Derek Kilmer said. *"Keeping the runway fully-funded will not only give emergency responders a vital lifeline to our region in an emergency, but also drive economic growth that will sustain skilled jobs in our region."*

Port Angeles officials and Rep. Kilmer worked with leaders of the state's emergency response community to explain to the FAA the unique importance of Fairchild's runway for both medical emergencies and emergency response. The FAA considered reducing the runway length it was willing to fund using the [Airport Improvement Program](#). The AIP funds the planning and development of public-use airports. According to the Washington Emergency Plan and Federal Emergency Management Agency, Fairchild International Airport is a piece of critical infrastructure vital to the government's response to wildfires and earthquakes.

Port Commission President Colleen McAleer said: ***“The Port of Port Angeles appreciates the FAA’s decision and the efforts of Congressman Kilmer, who listened to the community and conveyed its concerns. Our airport is vital to the safety and well-being of all county residents and visitors, and we look forward to working with the FAA and Representative Kilmer to protect this important regional asset into the future.”***

Major General Bret Daugherty, the Adjutant General and Commander of the Washington National Guard said: ***“During a Cascadia Subduction Zone event, the Fairchild Airport in Port Angeles will be a crucial asset. A 5000-foot runway at Fairchild will enable large aircraft to bring life-saving supplies and sustainment to the Olympic Peninsula and the communities along the Strait of Juan de Fuca.”***

Penelope Linterman, an Emergency Management Program Coordinator with the Clallam County Sheriff’s Office said: ***“the FAA decision to maintain our present runway’s length at 5,000 feet continues to allow large aircraft to land and takeoff here and will supply emergency essentials and personnel during a catastrophic disaster. This will save lives by improving the local response time during the event. It will also enable large aircraft traveling from the East or Midwest to land directly in Port Angeles without diverting to Central Washington or to an airport in the I-5 corridor. That deconflicts the airspace, saves time and allows direct evacuation of a limited number of critically wounded out of the area to receive prompt care.”***

In addition to raising the issue with the FAA, Rep. Derek Kilmer drafted legislation to reform the Airport Improvement Program to explicitly direct the FAA to consider how downsizing runways would affect the emergency response plan in the region where the airport is located. Kilmer is continuing to pursue a policy remedy that would prevent other rural communities from facing the same hard choices Port Angeles was given, but still gives the FAA the flexibility to determine the most effective use of the Airport Improvement Program’s funding.

In the past, FAA officials have told other communities [that runways shorter than 5,000 feet are not worth the federal government’s support](#), meaning Port Angeles could have seen diminished federal support for the airport over time if it couldn’t afford the repairs.

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