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CARDIN, MIKULSKI PRAISE CONGRESSIONAL PASSAGE OF BILL TO PROVIDE A ONE-YEAR EXTENSION OF THE EAS WAIVER FOR HAGERSTOWN AIRPORT

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Senate has passed legislation sponsored by **U.S. Senators Benjamin L. Cardin** and **Barbara A. Mikulski** (both D-MD) that will continue the Essential Air Service (EAS) program at Hagerstown Airport through Sept. 30, 2009. The extension was part of The Federal Aviation Administration Extension Act, which provides continuing authority for most FAA programs, although most are authorized only through March 30, 2009. The legislation has already passed the House and will go to the President, who is expected to sign it.

The EAS waiver was set to expire on Tuesday and the bill extends the program at Hagerstown Regional Airport for one year. Congress is expected to pass a four-year reauthorization of the FAA bill when it reconvenes next year and a four-year waiver for the Hagerstown EAS program will be included in that reauthorization. The one-year extension will make it easier for airport officials to continue their efforts to attract commercial passenger service to Hagerstown airport. Hagerstown Airport officials recently announced that starting on Nov. 14 Allegiant Air will provide direct flights between Hagerstown and Orlando, FL twice a week.

The EAS waiver allows states rather than the federal government to certify certain mileage calculations that are used to determine the EAS program eligibility. The extension of the waiver affects three airports: Hagerstown, Brookings, S.D., and Lancaster, PA.

“I continue to work for long-term reauthorization of the EAS waiver, but I am pleased that this one-year extension will help Hagerstown Airport officials in their efforts to attract a commercial carrier,” said **Senator Cardin**. “The EAS program is important to the future economic growth of Hagerstown and Western Maryland, and I will continue to work for its inclusion when Congress takes up the FAA reauthorization bill.”

“I know Western Maryland leaders see the Hagerstown Regional Airport as a major priority – it’s one of my top priorities too. I want to keep our airports strong and keep our Marylanders on the go,” said **Senator Mikulski**. “The EAS program is critical to the continued economic growth of Western Maryland. I will keep fighting in the U.S. Senate for federal investments to keep the Hagerstown Regional Airport strong.”

The Airline Deregulation Act of 1978 allowed airlines to provide air service to domestic markets as they saw fit, but Congress had the foresight to create the EAS Program to ensure a minimal

level of scheduled air service in small communities. Without the EAS Program, it would be much harder for smaller communities to attract a commercial carrier.

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