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Save Our Heritage

Protecting the birthplace of the American Revolution,
the cradle of the American Environmental Movement,
and the home of the American Literary Renaissance.

Even in times of crisis, we're called to take the long view to preserve our national heritage –because in doing so we fulfill one of the responsibilities that falls to all of us as Americans, and as inhabitants of this same small planet. And that is the responsibility that we are rising to meet today.

- President Barack Obama

October 21st, 2010

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

First and foremost, we collectively wish to thank you for your exemplary service to the nation and for your keen insight, intellect, vision, and leadership at this most critical time.

As historians and preservationists, we value your observation that at times of unprecedented challenge, Americans draw strength from their history – from the foresight and sacrifices of those brave men and women who made the great American experiment possible. Their dedication to the ideals of democracy serves as our touchstone. Our direct link to them is through their inspired words – *and in the tangible landscapes that remain*, telling their story and forming our collective memory. These national historic landscapes are invaluable and irreplaceable, *but they are not invulnerable*.

Thus, we are hopeful that you will take **a critical and time-sensitive step to save the Birthplace of the American Revolution** -- the hallowed grounds of Concord and Lexington Massachusetts, *Minute Man National Historical Park*, and the Cradle of the American Environmental Movement -- *Thoreau's Walden* – from the imminent threat of unbridled jet aviation expansion and its devastating concomitant noise and pollution.

We respectfully request that you convene the Federal Interagency Working Group established by President Clinton in 2001 to protect these National Treasures – and direct that Group to fulfill specific and essential objectives via the existing interagency MOU. (*Goals and policy brief attached*)

Directly abutting Minute Man NHP is a general aviation airport, Hanscom Field, which primarily serves private luxury aviation and is operated by the state agency, Massport. Recently, Massport has announced plans to **double the private jet infrastructure of the Airport**. Due to this type of threat, the National Trust for Historic Preservation has designated the surrounding area as one of the **11 Most Endangered Historic Places in America**.

Existing within a two-mile radius of the Airport are thousands of nationally and internationally recognized landmarks of significant historic and environmental importance. These sites draw millions of visitors annually and are a major contributor to the state's

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economy. They include: **Minute Man National Historical Park** (recently expanded - H.R. 146, an *America's Great Outdoors* public/private initiative, and honored by Congressional Resolution in 2009); **Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge; Thoreau's Walden Pond and Walden Woods; three designated Wild and Scenic Rivers; Freedom's Way National Heritage Area; the homes of Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, and Alcott; over 1,000 National Register eligible sites; and 8,000 acres of protected public open space.**

We believe the airport expansion plans are economically unwise because they threaten to impact tourism, and place a quasi-public agency in direct competition for aviation traffic with local smaller underutilized airports (and the related small businesses) that are seeking economic opportunities. **Please note that Hanscom Field Airport is not to be confused with Hanscom Air Force Base; operations at the base are strongly supported by the surrounding communities.**

For decades, thousands of American citizens, historians, environmentalists, the historic towns and communities and their State and Federal representatives, Scenic America, the National Trust, and the National Park Service have joined in unified opposition to expanded aviation plans that will increase noise and pollution over these rural historic landscapes. Years of collective efforts to establish protections for the area have not affected airport planning due to a complicated relationship between the FAA, The Park Service, and the Massachusetts Port Authority. We believe the already established Inter Agency Working Group is the best vehicle to make progress, ***but only if it is given appropriate executive goals and guidance.*** We need your help, Mr. President, and appeal to your affinity for American history and environmental stewardship.

In your inaugural address, you evoked the memory of the Patriots who stood their ground at Concord's Old North Bridge. In your August 31st address on the Iraq War you spoke eloquently of "the unbroken chain of heroes that stretches from Lexington to Gettysburg." Indeed, our national history is young, compared to that of other parts of the world, but it is profound and globally revered. Therefore, we stand most honored to partner with you in a steadfast commitment to protect the landscapes that define us as a nation. **Your action**, to preserve their *sanctity of place*, will ensure that these beloved icons of democracy will continue to inspire Americans, and citizens of the world, for generations to come.

Thank you for your devout patriotism and for your thoughtful consideration of this specific and time-sensitive request.



David McCullough



Ken Burns



Doris Kearns Goodwin



Douglas Brinkley



Edward O. Wilson



Don Henley



Anna West Winter
Executive Director, Save Our Heritage

**America's Historical and Environmental Treasures are not things of the past,
but a Promise for the Future.**

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