

July 9, 2008

Dear Senator Boxer;

By now, you and your staff should be very familiar with the family of Erin Reed, a native Californian killed Sept. 29, 2005 when the air ambulance she was working aboard crashed in Puget Sound. Over the past two and a half years Erin's family and friends have written and called you countless times and logged many hours traveling to Washington, DC from California and back to ask for your help to improve air medical safety.

Now's our chance. Yesterday, July 8 Senator Maria Cantwell (WA) introduced S. 3229, the Air Medical Service Safety Improvement Act of 2008 to make the skies safer for flight crews and patients. In the past last six months, there have been nine medical helicopter crashes and 17 deaths. This is not a new problem.

A recent Johns Hopkins study of emergency medical services helicopter crashes from 1983 through April 2005 found that one in four EMS helicopters is likely to crash during 15 years of service, and that the death rate for EMS flight crew members is 20 times the rate of all U.S. workers.

Between January 2002 and January 2005, there were 55 crashes of medical helicopters. In January 2006, the NTSB released a report identifying recurring gaps in safety and asked the FAA to mandate safety improvements. The FAA rejected all the following recommendations:

- Less stringent requirements for emergency medical operations conducted without patients on board;
- A lack of aviation flight risk-evaluation programs;
- A lack of consistent, comprehensive flight dispatch procedures; and
- No requirements to use technologies such as terrain awareness and warning systems that have the power to enhance flight safety.

Erin's family is asking you to support this important bill to protect the lives of flight crew and patients and honor those lost in service.

Sincerely,

Stacey Friedman

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