

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 16, 2025

The Honorable Lee Zeldin
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Zeldin:

I write to urgently bring your attention to an inadequately regulated source of pollution harming the health of the residents of our district: helicopter noise. Despite years of engagement from Members of Congress from New Jersey and New York, the advocacy of local leaders, and input from community residents, federal authorities have failed to take meaningful steps to address this crisis and protect the families that we represent from harmful, disruptive, constant helicopter travel. The Environmental Protection Agency (“EPA”) must fulfill its responsibilities to address this critical quality of life issue.

The EPA possesses important obligations to address noise pollution, including that which results from helicopters. The law requires the EPA to coordinate all federal programs related to noise control and to protect Americans from the impacts of noise pollution.¹ Critically, it must consult with the Federal Aviation Administration (“FAA”) – which leads aviation regulation in our nation – on noise-related regulations and standards.² Under those authorities, the EPA and FAA have a history of collaborating on actions to reduce aviation noise.³ As such, I write to request the EPA’s input on helicopter noise in the New Jersey-New York metropolitan area.

Regional helicopter travel is routine, disruptive, and often nonessential. New York’s City Council nevertheless estimated that a total of 8,848 helicopters flew over New York City land or water in May 2023 alone.⁴ Per FAA-determined flight routes, many of these flights originate from a heliport in Kearny, New Jersey, then fly over Jersey City, Hoboken, and Bayonne. Between 20 and 140 flights fly over the same residential neighborhoods each day, meaning that intrusive and unnecessary helicopters repeatedly disturb homes, businesses, schools, and daycares in some of the most densely populated municipalities in the country.⁵

While the full scope of helicopters’ noise footprint remains understudied, their flights shake apartment buildings, wake babies, generate anxieties about safety, and deteriorate overall health and quality of life. Outreach from our constituents confirms the severity of frequent, deafening helicopter flyovers. Our office has received nearly 400 discrete inquiries regarding helicopters since the beginning of this year. In one letter, a mother wrote that “every night, every nap, my child’s health is being impacted because she can’t sleep.” Residents are so frustrated with FAA’s inaction that they have organized multiple grassroots organizations purely to advocate for federal and local officials to address this issue.⁶

¹ 42 USC § 4903

² 49 USC § 44715

³ U.S. Comptroller General. “[Control Of Aircraft Noise and Air Pollution; Meetings Between FAA and The Public.](#)” 1975.

⁴ New York City Council. “Helicopter Noise and Safety,” May 2023. <https://council.nyc.gov/data/helicopter-noise-and-safety/>.

⁵ McDougall, AJ. “[Low-Flying Helicopters Buzz over N.J. Every Day. There’s a Crusade to Ground Them Forever.](#)” NJ.com. June 22, 2025.

⁶ Stop The Chop NY NJ. “Stop The Chop NY/NJ.” Accessed October 1, 2025. <https://stopthechopnynj.org/>.

Our constituents live with incessant loud noise generated by helicopters as a result of regulatory loopholes. Current regulations exempt helicopters from FAA's minimum safe altitudes in certain cases.⁷ In our district, helicopters often fly below the minimum safe altitude to avoid other aircraft in complicated airspace and therefore emit a deafening, disruptive thumping noise. At 1,000 feet, helicopters can emit noise at up to 80 decibels. Yet many helicopters in our region likely fly far lower and therefore far louder, generating even more noise that is both unresearched and neglected by federal regulation.⁸ Even with large variations in altitude, the cumulative noise that helicopters generate could exceed the noise levels that EPA identified as preventing interference with daily life, and may reach levels that are threatening to public health.⁹ Indeed, constituents and helicopter noise community advocates stress the cumulative noise impact of constant helicopter travel.

I am deeply concerned that helicopter noise damages the welfare of my constituency. While the EPA's previous noise research focused on hearing loss, more recent scholarship demonstrates that noise pollution generates far more wide-ranging health risks. Long-term exposure to noise creates annoyance, disturbs sleep, accelerates cardiovascular issues, and even contributes to premature mortality.¹⁰ This year, new research linked noise exposure to mental health conditions such as anxiety, depression, and even suicide.¹¹ Helicopter noise undermines public health and welfare.

Again, given the high volume of outreach on and urgency of the issue, there is a clear need for the EPA to contribute its expertise in protecting public and environmental wellbeing – as directed by Congress – to addressing the disruptive, harmful noise pollution that helicopters cause.

As such, I request written responses on the EPA's efforts to protect the public regarding several helicopter noise related issues:

- What steps has the EPA taken to ensure that helicopter noise is adequately incorporated into broader environmental priorities, such as reducing noise pollution or improving quality of life for affected communities?
- Does the EPA have a strategy in place to address potential increases in helicopter noise due to the growth of industries like helicopter tourism, delivery services, or urban air mobility?
- Does the EPA monitor noise pollution and health impacts associated with helicopter travel in the New Jersey-New York City metropolitan area? Has it assessed whether current flight routes and volume of helicopter traffic in the region are adequately protective of public health and welfare?
- FAA's regulations on minimum altitudes contain an exemption that permits helicopters to "be operated at less than the minimums prescribed" in the section.¹² Has the EPA evaluated or worked with FAA to address the noise pollution and health impacts associated with that exemption for helicopters, to ensure public health and welfare are adequately protected?
- Has the EPA evaluated whether FAA's helicopter noise certification standards, especially those governing maximum allowable noise levels, adequately protect public health and welfare?¹³
- Does the EPA believe that additional review of the above-mentioned regulations is necessary?

⁷ 14 CFR § 91.119

⁸ "Fly Neighborly Guide." Helicopter Association International, n.d.

⁹ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. [Information on Levels of Environmental Noise Required to Protect Public Health and Welfare with an Adequate Margin of Safety](#). 550/74-004. Washington, DC: US Environmental Protection Agency, March 1974.

¹⁰ European Environmental Agency. "Noise," June 24, 2025. <https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/topics/in-depth/noise>.

¹¹ Hahad, Omar, Marin Kuntic, Sadeer Al-Kindi, Ivana Kuntic, Donya Gilan, Katja Petrowski, Andreas Daiber, and Thomas Münzel. "Noise and Mental Health: Evidence, Mechanisms, and Consequences." *Journal of Exposure Science & Environmental Epidemiology* 35, no. 1 (January 2025): 16–23. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41370-024-00642-5>.

¹² 14 CFR § 91.119

¹³ 14 CFR § 36.803

I look forward to your prompt response to the above questions no later than November 16, 2025. Furthermore, I request that EPA urgently work to assess helicopters' impact as a source of noise pollution and work with the FAA to resolve this critical quality of life issue, including by reviewing the effectiveness of existing regulations. We are grateful for your consideration and your work to protect American families from helicopter noise.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Robert Menendez". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Robert J. Menendez
Member of Congress
New Jersey's Eighth Congressional District