

3 East End lawmakers seek helicopter rule changes

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Three East End lawmakers have asked the [Federal Aviation Administration](#) to alter its published flight rules for [Manhattan](#)-to-Hamptons helicopter traffic, urging the agency to allow more flight path flexibility and higher altitudes.

The letter, signed by Assemb. Marc Alessi (D-[Wading River](#)), state Sen. Kenneth LaValle (R-[Port Jefferson](#)) and [Suffolk](#) Legis. Ed Romaine (R-[Shoreham](#)), is one of more than 500 comments the FAA received during the 30-day comment period on the proposed mandatory helicopter flight path the agency published in May.

The letter asked the FAA to publish a South Shore route for South Fork traffic to ease pressure on air routes over [Long Island](#) Sound and North Shore communities.

"We think it's fairer that if you have a South Fork-bound flight, you take the southern route," Alessi said yesterday. "If you have a destination on the [North Fork](#) you should take a northern route."

Friday marked the end of the comment period on the proposed regulations, which the FAA agreed to after years of lobbying from Sen. Charles [Schumer](#) (D-N.Y.).

According to the NEXA Advisors, a Washington-based aerospace lobbying and consulting group, 83 percent of the comments submitted oppose the FAA's proposed regulations.

The Eastern Region Helicopter Council, the group that represents most East End-bound helicopter pilots and owners, issued a 22-page letter opposing the regulations.

Jeffrey Smith, the council's chairman, said the rules were written in a "completely haphazard" manner.

"Everybody thinks this is going to be one of those quick fixes," Smith said. "But when you have a rule set like this, there is no going back and saying later it didn't work."

Schumer spokesman Mike Morey defended the proposed regulations and said they will provide relief to residents who have for years complained about low-flying helicopters.

"Despite repeated attempts to forge a workable voluntary system, operators have continued to fly too low over populated areas and disrupt the quality of life for too many [Long Island](#) families," Morey said.

"Summer is the high season for helicopter travel so the sooner these regulations are put in place, the sooner [Long Islanders](#) will have some relief." The rules require helicopters to fly at 2,500 feet along a route 1 ½ miles offshore over the Long Island Sound between [Oyster Bay Cove](#) and the East End. The regulations do not govern flights west of [Oyster Bay Cove](#)

The three East End lawmakers asked the altitude floor be raised to 3,000 feet and requested the FAA publish multiple points at which helicopters may cross over land so as to not burden a single community with excessive air traffic. The FAA will take about a month to review the comments before making a determination on whether to codify the flight path rule into law.