

Big airlines fight with smaller ones over airport rights

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Federal regulators are proposing allowing airlines to hold on to their valuable takeoff and landing slots at several big U.S. airports, even if they are not fully using their rights due to lower traffic during the pandemic.

The Federal Aviation Administration said Friday it plans to extend temporary waivers of minimum flight requirements at Kennedy and LaGuardia airports in New York and Reagan Washington National near Washington, D.C., through March 27. Those waivers, approved in April as [air travel](#) collapsed, expire Oct. 24.

The FAA allocates takeoff and landing slots at congested airports under a "use it or lose it" approach. Big airlines including American, Delta and United fear losing slots in New York and Washington because they are operating far fewer flights during the pandemic. They are supported by trade groups for U.S. and global airlines.

However, budget carriers Spirit Airlines and

Allegiant Air and a trade group for North American airports oppose the extension.

Spirit said big airlines that control most of the slots will continue to seek more waivers, which it said would limit competition. The airport group said waivers encourage underuse of takeoff and landing slots, which it called a valuable public resource.

Travelers United, a consumer group, said it will be years before the big airlines can return to pre-pandemic flight numbers while some low-cost carriers are ready and willing to jump in and should be allowed to do so.

The FAA proposes to extend less sweeping protections for incumbent [airlines](#) at four other airports in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago and Newark, New Jersey, through Dec. 31.

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