

Which End Of The Stick?

To the Editor:

Thor Solberg apparently thinks it's OK for airports to use eminent domain to condemn the property of residents and businesses, but it's not OK when a community uses the powers of eminent domain to protect itself from the predations of an expanding airport.

He writes in the September issue of *Airport Business* (airportbusiness.com/publication/article.jsp?publd=1&id=7911), "States and municipalities have long been involved with the improvement and operations of local airports, using their power in areas of zoning, taxation and development. And, they have wielded the powerful tool of eminent domain to assist airports in their development by acquiring the land necessary to make needed improvements."

Recent aviation history supports his observation that government has traditionally used its powers of eminent domain on behalf of airports. Ask the neighbors of Lambert Field in St. Louis, where an expansion of the airport gobbled up 1,950 parcels, including more than 75 businesses, several churches and schools. Or ask the neighbors of Cleveland's Hop-

kins International Airport, where successive expansions since the 1980s have devoured 900 residences and businesses. Or ask the more than 1,000 households who were forced to move to make way for Seattle-Tacoma Airport's third runway. There are dozens more examples.

Mr. Solberg doesn't protest these uses of eminent domain, which have forced thousands of people from their homes and businesses to facilitate airport expansion. He only protests when residents of a community, faced with imminent airport expansion, fight back through their elected officials to prevent his airport from expanding.

Mr. Solberg's protests are hypocritical. I conclude from his article in *Airport Business* that he would be fine with using eminent domain to expand his airport at some future date. So it's not the principle of eminent domain that he has problem with. It's that he's on the wrong end of it.

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