

Senate backs basing F-35s at Madison air base

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The Senate approved via voice vote a resolution expressing support for basing F-35 fighter jets at the Air National Guard Base in Madison after some residents near the airport have raised concerns over noise from the new planes.

Truax Field is now home to F-16s and the debate over the possibility of the new planes being located in Madison has largely focused on whether the F-35s would be louder, resulting in a bigger impact on local residents.

Sen. Fred Risser, D-Madison, tried to amend the resolution to urge the Air Force to conduct more study on the impact of basing F-35s at the airport. But it was rejected via voice vote.

Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald, one of the resolution's co-sponsors, warned during the debate that Truax Field losing out on being home to the F-35s could mean the loss of the base's mission. He said that would extend well beyond missing out on the 1,600 jobs that housing the new planes would create. It would go to raising questions about what Truax's mission is, possibly putting the base on the chopping block at some point.

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"You don't want a bunch of empty buildings out at Truax," said Fitzgerald, R-Juneau.

The Assembly is scheduled to take up the resolution during its floor period Thursday.

Ahead of the Senate vote, Rep. Tony Kurtz, R-Wonewoc, said concerns over increased noise in residential areas from F-35s based in Truax Field are "being overblown." He's one of the Assembly co-sponsors.