

LONG ISLAND



THE MUSEUM

American Airpower Museum
OPENED 11 years ago at Republic Airport, East Farmingdale
HOUSED IN Hangar built by Republic Aviation about 1940.
FEATURES Restored 1944 control tower
VISITORS 40,000 a year

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 Video of the news conference at the museum
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VINTAGE SAVE

Museum for classic warplanes rescued from demolition

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The Republic Airport home of the American Airpower Museum, whose collection of vintage military planes dates to the 1930s, has been saved from demolition, two federal lawmakers said yesterday.

The historic hangar, slated for removal under a Federal Aviation Administration runway safety program, probably will be relocated instead to another place at the airport, Sen. Charles Schumer and Rep. Steve Israel said.

"To demolish the museum would be demolishing history," Israel said.

Schumer added: "This is a monumental win for not only Long Island, but for veterans across the country."

The museum's planes include three that saw service in World War II — a Curtiss-Wright P-40 Warhawk fighter built in 1935, a P-51 Mustang fighter and a Grumman TBM Avenger torpedo bomber. Later aircraft include a Soviet L-39 Albatross jet trainer and a



Long Island's own "Josie the Riveter," Josephine Rachiele of West Babylon, is applauded at a museum ceremony yesterday.

General Dynamics F-111 strike aircraft used from 1967 to 1996.

The FAA said three years ago that the East Farmingdale hangar violated safety standards. The agency said it could fund demolition — expected to cost several million dollars — but not relocation.

Schumer (D-N.Y.) and Israel (D-Huntington) introduced

legislation to change that position and lobbied the FAA. Last month, Catherine Lang, FAA acting associate administrator for airports, told them what they wanted to hear.

She wrote that while the hangar's location "prevents the airport from complying with three minimum airport safety standards," it was up to



The American Airpower Museum in East Farmingdale will be moved, not demolished, thanks to the efforts of Sen. Charles Schumer and Rep. Steve Israel.

the airport "to decide how to fulfill its statutory obligations relating to safety." She added that the agency would allow demolition funds to be used for relocation, and if the building was historic, it would not be torn down.

Republic Airport director Michael Geiger said the state Office of Parks, Recreation

and Historic Preservation has determined the hangar is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

The FAA had allocated \$10.6 million to tear down the 35,000-square-foot hangar, built by Republic Aviation around 1940, and build a safety apron at the end of a runway to provide more space for

planes to stop in emergencies.

Geiger said the airport is conducting an environmental study of either moving both the museum structure and an adjacent historic hangar north of the museum used by flight schools or leaving them in place. But he said that because the two hangars are "very close to the runway" the most

likely outcome was moving them south, to the far side of an adjacent hangar.

The cost of the move will be \$10 million to \$15 million and will be paid for by the FAA and the state, Geiger said. A public hearing will be held after an environmental study is completed in the next few months, with final approval on

a plan by the end of the year. The relocation would take place by early 2013.

"I'm happy they didn't take it down," said Josephine Rachiele, 87, of West Babylon, who worked on construction of Republic P-47 Thunderbolt fighters at the hangar during World War II. "There are so many memories."