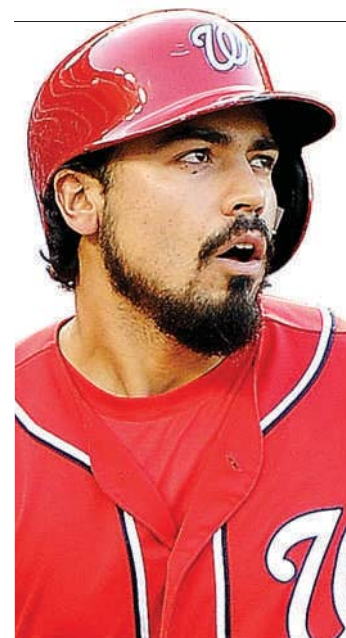


express

Wednesday
04.01.15



Defensive shift

Nats to move Escobar to third with Rendon's lingering knee injury **13**

Pushing ahead

Arkansas passes a religious-freedom bill similar to Indiana's law **8**



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A Tidal shift?

Jay Z's music service pays artists more. Do listeners even care? **19**

HELLO
MY NAME IS

National
Reagan
DCA

What to call the Virginia airport is a source of local contention, with names splitting along party lines and by age, our survey shows **6**

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A name still up in the air

17 years on, people still fervidly disagree about what to call a certain NoVa airport



THREE MIDDLE-AGED MEN SIT IN AN AIRPORT TERMINAL, killing time before their flight home to Columbia, Mo. When asked where they are, they respond in unison: “Reagan National.” A tall woman walking by disagrees. “National! It’s called National!” she says, as she rushes to her gate. In a nutshell, that’s the current state of affairs at the airport formerly known as Washington National. Though the name changed to Ronald Reagan National Airport in 1998, many — especially D.C.-area Democrats — still won’t call it that.

That’s according to an online survey Express conducted in December after noticing intense disagreement among the staff. To our surprise, 42,082 people responded, and many of them feel just as strongly about the issue.

“I’m still mad about the name, because of how it got passed. It got forced upon all the people here by a small group of powerful men in Congress,” says survey respondent Jason West, 57, a business analyst who lives in D.C.



Several survey respondents cited the statue of Ronald Reagan outside Ronald Reagan National Airport as a reason to call the airport “Reagan.”

West’s complaint is a common one. Then-Senate majority leader Trent Lott, R-Miss., pushed the bill through Congress over protests from local leaders, congressional Democrats and even the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority.

Then, Metro and the National Park Service were forced to revise signs at the agencies’ own expense.

“It’s almost like all those Republicans wanted to stick a middle finger up to all the people who live here,” West recalls. “I don’t know why [President Bill] Clinton didn’t veto it.”

Mike McCurry, Clinton's former press secretary, suspects his boss had bigger problems on his mind at the time. "My memory is that in February 1998, we were rather occupied at the White House with a young lady named Monica," he says. "I have faint memories of this being a big deal on Capitol Hill, but I think we pretty much stayed out of it."

The loss still smarts, says Patti Brown, 53, a consultant who lives in Arlington. Though it's been 17 years since the name change, she still avoids the R-word.

"A lot of times when you call cab companies and you say DCA or National, they will correct you and say 'Ronald Reagan National Airport,' and I just sigh and say, 'Yes, that one.'"

Like most survey respondents who refuse to call the airport "Reagan," Brown is, in her words, "a big ol' Democrat." In our survey, only 35 percent of Democrats call the airport "Reagan" or "Reagan National," compared to 72 percent of Republicans.

One such Republican is Chris Sloan, 50, a banker from Connecticut.

"I don't call it Reagan because of my political affiliation," Sloan says. "I call it Reagan because that's the name of the airport." His is one of the most common reasons cited by survey respondents for saying Reagan.

Political reasons were most often cited for not calling the airport "Reagan," particularly the president's treatment of air traffic controllers. Reagan's firing of 11,000 striking air traffic controllers in 1981 may also be why neither pilots nor air traffic controllers seem to use the airport's proper name. When talking to pilots, air traffic controllers say DCA or National, says Federal Aviation Administration spokeswoman Laura Brown, who didn't speculate as to why that is. Pilots tend to say "Washington Tower" or "National Tower." (You can listen in at liveatc.net.)



"I don't know much about Ronald Reagan. I think he was president before I was born. I call it DCA, because that's easiest to text."

DENZEL THOMAS, 25, a local who prefers to use the airport's code

In the long run, it looks like "Reagan" will win out. Our survey found that younger generations are more likely to use Reagan, regardless of political affiliation. That may be because, to them, "Reagan" simply connotes "the convenient airport that's on Metro" — just as "Dulles," to many locals, means "the airport that's way out in Virginia," not "the namesake of John Foster Dulles, architect of Cold War brinkmanship."

That's certainly the case for Denzel Thomas, 25.

"I don't know much about Ronald Reagan," said the D.C.-based artist, while waiting for a flight to Miami. "I think he was president before I was born."

As for what to call the airport, Thomas sidesteps the whole issue.

"I call it DCA, because that's easiest to text," he says.

STORY BY SADIE DINGFELDER; SURVEY BY HOLLY J. MORRIS (EXPRESS)

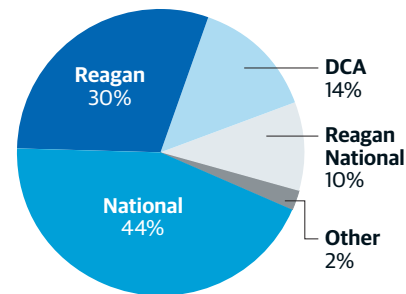
Reagan vs. National

In December, Express conducted an online survey asking people what they call "the airport in Northern Virginia that's not Dulles." The sample is not representative of anyone other than readers who cared enough to take the survey. A case in point: 62 percent of respondents identify as Democrat, 18 percent independent, 12 percent Republican and 8 percent other. Given that limitation, we're not focusing on summary statistics — e.g., that 41 percent of respondents refer to the airport as National, as compared with 31 percent Reagan, 13 percent DCA and 12 percent Reagan National. Those numbers are probably slanted by the underrepresentation of Republicans and out-of-towners in our sample. If you'd like to crunch numbers yourself, download our data at readexpress.com. Here's what we found:

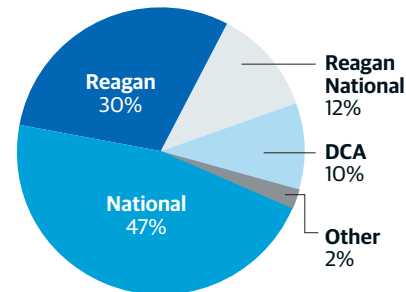
Location matters

Former D.C. residents appear to be holding the biggest grudge against Ronald Reagan. Out-of-towners are most likely to accept that the airport's name has changed.

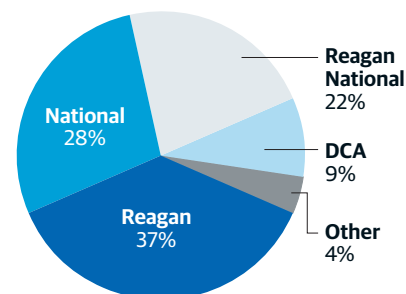
LIVE IN D.C. AREA NOW



USED TO LIVE IN D.C. AREA



NEVER LIVED IN D.C. AREA



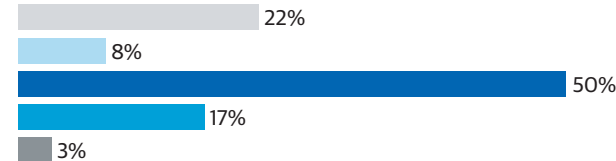
Note: Some charts don't add up to 100 percent because of rounding

Political affiliation makes a big difference

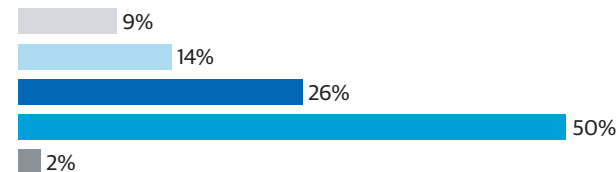
As with most things, Republicans and Democrats strongly disagree about what to call the airport in question.

Legend: Reagan National (light blue), Reagan (dark blue), Other (grey), DCA (light blue), National (medium blue).

REPUBLICANS



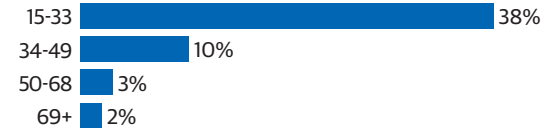
DEMOCRATS



Democrats who use 'Reagan' skew young

The resistance toward calling the airport "Reagan" is waning among younger Democrats, who may not remember The Gipper.

AGES



Millennials are on board with 'Reagan'

Those born from 1981 to 1999 usually use the official name.

Legend: Reagan National (light blue), Reagan (dark blue), Other (grey), DCA (light blue), National (medium blue).

