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## **Wyden, Blumenthal, Democratic Colleagues Reintroduce Bill of Rights for Airline Passengers**

**The Airline Passengers' Bill of Rights would put in place essential consumer protections for fliers, including passenger compensation for airline-caused delays and cancellations & payments to passengers for oversold flights**

*Washington, DC* – Ahead of a busy holiday travel season, U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden (D-OR) said today he has joined with U.S. Sens. Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Edward J. Markey (D-MA), Bob Casey (D-PA) and Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) to reintroduce comprehensive legislation to expand protections for air travelers.

Among a host of key consumer protections, the *Airline Passengers' Bill of Rights* would ensure that airlines provide passengers with fair compensation, refunds, and recourse in the event of airline-caused flight delays and cancellations, require airlines to pay at least \$1,350 to passengers denied boarding as a result of an oversold flight, and mandate airlines to immediately refund bag fees for damaged or lost bags.

**“Almost everyone who has flown is familiar with how much of a hassle air travel can be, and COVID-19 has only amplified many of the challenges,” Wyden said. “It’s time for a new ‘Airline Passengers’ Bill of Rights and to stand up for the rights of all air passengers by ensuring ironclad consumer protections for air travel.”**

**“This comprehensive bill will make the skies friendlier for airline passengers,”** said Blumenthal. **“From skyrocketing fees and shrinking seats to airline-caused delays and cancellations, air travel has become stressful, unpredictable, and uncomfortable for fliers. As passengers are nickel-and-dimed at every turn, the airline industry has raked in billions. Americans are in dire need of stronger consumer rights and protections, and I’m proud to lead the Airline Passengers’ Bill of Rights to restore sanity to the skies.”**

This legislation expands on the advancements Blumenthal and Senate Commerce Committee Democrats have made on this issue, both in the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Reauthorization Act of 2018 and the 2016 FAA extension, and follows President Joe Biden’s August Executive Order directing the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) to engage in a series of rulemakings to address unfair airline baggage and in-flight service fees.

The *Airline Passengers’ Bill of Rights* would protect air travelers by:

### **Requiring Airlines to Refund Tickets and Compensate Passengers for Delays and Cancellations Caused by the Airlines**

- Requires airlines to provide ticket refunds and alternative transportation for flights delayed between one and four hours.
- Requires airlines to provide ticket refunds, alternate transportation, compensation, and cover the cost of meals and lodging (as applicable) for flights delayed more than four hours.
- Directs the DOT to facilitate interline agreements between airlines to ensure availability of alternative flights.
- Cracks down on airlines using weather as an excuse for delays and cancellations that are actually the airlines’ fault.

### **Providing Compensation for Involuntary Denied Boarding**

- Establishes that \$1,350 is the minimum level of compensation an air carrier or foreign air carrier must pay to a passenger who is involuntarily denied boarding as the result of an oversold flight.
- Encourages airlines to provide compensation to passengers who relinquish their seat in the form of a cash payment.
- Prohibits airlines from imposing a cap on the amount of compensation provided to a passenger for relinquishing their seat.

### **Stopping Airlines from Endangering Safety by Shrinking Seats**

- Prohibits airlines from shrinking seat size further until DOT implements a minimum seat size requirement.

### **Bolstering the Transparency of Passengers' Rights**

- Requires airline employees to undergo biannual training on passengers' rights.
- Ensures that passengers receive a clear explanation of their rights at ticket purchase and throughout travel.

### **Protecting Basic Humanity on Planes**

- Requires that the FAA study food and water safety on aircraft and mandate drinking water and restrooms be available free of charge.
- Requires working restrooms on all aircraft and that restrooms must accommodate passengers with disabilities.

## **Grounding Sky-High Nickel-and-Dime Fees**

- Prohibits airlines from charging exorbitant, unnecessary fees that bear no relation to the service provided.
- Requires airlines reveal the true costs of flying and offer lowest fares on multi-segment flights.
- Requires airlines be transparent about changes and costs associated with frequent flyer programs.
- Requires airlines refund bag fees immediately for damaged or lost bags.

## **Restoring Consumers' Rights to Pursue Claims against Airlines**

- Reinstates the right of passengers to sue airlines in federal and state court for unfair and deceptive practices.
- Reinstates the right of passengers with disabilities to sue airlines in federal court for denying basic access.
- Improves process for passengers to submit airline complaints and forces airlines to address concerns quickly.

## **Bolstering DOT's Enforcement against the Airline Industry**

- Requires the DOT to explain reasons for failing to impose penalties on airlines for violations of passenger rights.
- Institutes a study by DOT and consumer groups on the feasibility of system in which fines on airlines go directly to passengers.

- Eliminates the cap on fines that DOT charges airlines for violating consumer protection laws and prevents airlines from negotiating low, slap-on-the wrist fines for egregious conduct.

### **Addressing Lack of Meaningful Competition in the Airline Industry**

- Requires a Government Accountability Office investigation into the fairness of airfares and fees as compared to the costs of services provided on flights since the consolidation of air carriers.