



PRESS RELEASE

Consumer Reports Welcomes New DOT Airline Passenger Protections

January 13, 2021

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Consumer Reports is pleased that in the waning days of the current Administration, the U.S. Department of Transportation has issued a final rule today that clarifies and strengthens existing regulations that apply to airlines bumping passengers and mishandling baggage. The new rule will take effect in April, four years after the infamous “Dr. Dao Incident,” in which a paying passenger was dragged off a United Express flight.

Many of the key provisions on bumping—or “involuntary denied boardings”—directly address proposals that CR put forth in testimony before the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee at its marathon 4.5 hour hearing in May 2017, a month after the United Express event generated national outrage.

“As we recommended before Congress four years ago, these new rules will rightfully put the onus for oversold flights and other operational disruptions on the airlines, not the passengers,” said William J. McGee, CR’s Aviation Adviser. “In far too many instances, airlines shift their mistakes and miscalculations onto their paying customers. We applaud this action by DOT and hope it will soon be followed by further long-overdue efforts on critical consumer rights and protections.”

Among the highlights of the new rule:

- prohibiting the involuntary bumping of passengers who have already boarded an airplane.
- raising compensation for bumped passengers from \$675 to \$775 for delays of up to two hours, and from \$1,350 to \$1,550 for delays of more than two hours.
- clarifying requirements to notify passengers about oversold flights.
- removing any maximum limits on compensation for denied boarding, voluntary or involuntary.
- applying these rules to foreign airlines operating within the United States.
- raising compensation for mishandled baggage from \$3,500 to \$3,800

The new rule will take effect 90 days after publication in the Federal Register.

CR remains committed to fighting for the safety, health, security, and rights of airline passengers, and looks forward to working with the incoming Biden Administration to strengthen existing DOT and Federal Aviation Administration regulations.

EXPERTS



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LINK TO CR'S 2017 CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY:

<https://advocacy.consumerreports.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Consumers-Union-McGee-05-02-2017-House-airline-hearing.pdf> (<https://advocacy.consumerreports.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Consumers-Union-McGee-05-02-2017-House-airline-hearing.pdf>)

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