

Court Confirms Junk Fee Lawsuit Against Sonesta Hotels Should Proceed to Jury Trial

Travelers United defeated Sonesta Hotels' attempt to have a lawsuit challenging junk fee practices dismissed on Thursday, March 21, 2024. As the Court explained, "a reasonable juror could . . . find the stage at which [the junk fee] disclosure was made is material to the consumer's decision," and accordingly, the case must be resolved by a jury, not a judge.

The lawsuit is one of a number of recent actions brought by Travelers United that seek to put an end to the industry standard "bait-and-switch" practice of advertising hotel rooms for one price but refusing to actually sell the rooms for the advertised rate.

Tellingly, Sonesta does not deny engaging in the practice. "This order stands as a warning to the travel industry: if you're going to advertise a hotel room or service for a particular price to consumers, you must be willing to actually complete the sale for the originally advertised price," said Wes Griffith of Tycko & Zavareei, one of Travelers United's attorneys in the action.

The court's order also confirmed that Travelers United can serve as class a representative and shows that DC non-profits have an additional tool to help shape policy through class litigation.

This pivotal ruling marks a triumph for Travelers United and underscores the organization's commitment to advocating for fairness and transparency in the travel industry.