

Rep. Israel Calls on Airlines to Keep Promises to Passengers this Holiday Season

More than 24 million Americans will fly over Thanksgiving; new legislation will require airlines to fully disclose all restrictions and rules for travel vouchers



Islip, NY— Tuesday, Rep. Steve Israel (D–Long Island), joined by Islip Town Supervisor Phil Nolan, called on the airline industry to keep promises to passengers during the holiday travel season. Israel urged the United States Senate to pass the “Passengers Bill of Rights,” which passed in the House last year, and announced new legislation to help the passengers who give up their seats on overcrowded flights.

“Holidays are an occasion to visit our loved ones, but often getting there isn’t easy. It’s time for airlines to keep their promises to passengers,” Israel said. “When a passenger volunteers to give up their seat so an over-booked plane can take off, they should be compensated for the inconvenience. Unfortunately, the rewards airlines dole out can come with invisible strings attached. In an effort to protect those generous travelers, I’m introducing a new bill that will require full disclosure and good faith from airlines who want to strike a deal with their customers. I also supported the ‘Passengers Bill of Rights’ legislation that passed in the House last year. Today I’m calling for the Senate to join us and pass legislation to defend the rights of air travelers.”

“The Coalition for Airline Passengers Bill of Rights is grateful for Congressman Israel's leadership regarding full disclosure to airline passengers who are denied boarding or are ‘bumped’ from oversold aircraft. Lack of information is one of the key issues frustrating the flying public, and clearly these steps will help aid the public to understand their rights while flying,” said Kate Hanni, president of the coalition. “Our hotline is available for the flying public during the holidays, toll free, in the event that they experience any issues while traveling by air. 1-877-359-3776.”

More than 24 million Americans will travel by air for the Thanksgiving holiday in a year when airlines have reduced the number of flights they offer. Although customer traffic is expected to decline approximately 10 percent this season, airlines are cutting their flights by up to 16 percent:

- United Airlines is cutting domestic capacity by up to 15.5 percent this quarter
- Continental Airlines is cutting domestic capacity by 9 percent this quarter
- American Airlines is cutting domestic capacity by 12.5 percent this quarter, and
- Delta Air Lines is cutting domestic capacity by 16 percent during the Thanksgiving period.

Israel’s legislation, the “Keeping Promises to Passengers Act,” will require airlines to inform passengers about any restrictions on vouchers given to those who are voluntarily “bumped” from oversold flights prior to the passenger giving up his or her seat. The legislation will be introduced in the 111th Congress.

The “Passengers Bill of Rights,” which Israel supported, passed the House of Representatives in September 2007. The legislation requires airlines and airports to develop plans to 1. Provide clean drinking water to passengers, 2. Allow passengers to deplane following excessive

delays, and 3. Allow the Transportation Department to impose civil penalties on airlines and airports who don't comply. The legislation has not yet passed in the Senate.