
AAPR Blasts United Airlines Decision to Discriminate Against People of Size; New Policy Charges Overweight Passengers for Two Tickets

WASHINGTON, D.C. (April 17, 2009) – The [Association for Airline Passenger Rights](http://www.flyfriendlyskies.com) (AAPR) today blasted the decision by United Airlines to violate the Civil Rights of people of size by charging them for two tickets if they are deemed to be overweight. United Airlines announced that its ticket agents will begin denying boarding passes to people of size if they are "unable to comfortably fasten a safety belt with one extension or sit comfortably with armrests down,"¹ unless they purchase a second ticket.

"They're at it again," said **Brandon M. Macsata**, Executive Director of the Association for Airline Passenger Rights, of the airline industry. "United is now the latest airline to shelve customer service standards in search for higher profits, while claiming that the new policy is to *'protect'* other passengers. At issue should not be the size of any passenger, but rather why the airlines continue to pack coach passengers like sardines into the cabin."

Most coach airline seats are smaller than seats on buses or trains, even movie theaters – yet unlike in those environments, customers cannot simply get up and move around but are rather forced to sit uncomfortably until the flight's destination is reached.

Macsata further argued, "Where does this madness end? So now a customer who purchases an advanced ticket online can show up at the airport and arbitrarily denied boarding because a ticket agent deems him or her to be overweight? He or she would be at the mercy of the airlines – an unthinkable scenario especially if the passenger is traveling for a family emergency or death in the family. I wonder just how much will be the price of that second ticket?"

AAPR also questioned the legality of the discriminatory policy and whether it violates the Air Carrier Access Act governing the treatment of passengers with disabilities. It is documented that certain health conditions, and sometimes medications, can cause weight gain and therefore should be protected by law. The Canadian Transportation Agency (CTA) addressed this issue earlier this year, when it issued its "one-person, one-fare" ruling covering passengers with disabilities – including "clinically obese" passengers who cannot fit into a single seat.

United Airlines joins Southwest Airlines aggressively discriminating people of size.

The Association for Airline Passenger Rights is a 501(c)(4) tax-exempt, nonprofit organization whose mission is to promote fairer customer service and accessibility standards in the airline industry and to improve passenger satisfaction. AAPR was formed in response to growing dissatisfaction among American consumers toward the airline industry. According to the American Consumer Satisfaction Index (ACSI), a polling organization that rates over forty-three businesses in ten sectors based on in-depth interviewing and computer-based extrapolation of its results, the Big Six legacy airlines (full-service providers with national or international flight routes) rate the lowest of all sixteen industries surveyed in the first quarter of 2008.

For more information about the Association for Airline Passenger Rights, please visit www.flyfriendlyskies.com or contact AAPR directly at info@flyfriendlyskies.com.

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¹ WBBM 780, "United to charge heavier passengers twice to fly", April 16, 2009.