

## **Association for Airline Passenger Rights Calls on Congress to Act on Government Accountability Office's Recommendations; GAO Issues Report, "Airline Passenger Protections: More Data and Analysis Needed to Understand Effects of Flight Delays," (GAO-11-733)**

*To enhance aviation consumers' decision-making, DOT should collect and publicize more comprehensive on-time performance data*

WASHINGTON, D.C. (September 20, 2011) – The [Association for Airline Passenger Rights](http://www.flyfriendlyskies.com) ("AAPR") today called on the U.S. Congress to heed the recommendations issued by the Government Accountability Office ("GAO") in its recent report, **Airline Passenger Protections: More Data and Analysis Needed to Understand Effects of Flight Delays** (GAO-11-733). GAO's findings, which included expert testimony provided by AAPR, seek to enhance aviation consumers' decision-making.

"We fully support GAO's call for the Secretary of Transportation to collect and publicize more comprehensive on-time performance data to ensure that information on most flights, to airports of all sizes, is included in the Bureau of Transportation Statistics' database," said **Brandon M. Macsata**, Executive Director of the Association for Airline Passenger Rights. "Consumers deserve to know as much as possible about on-time performance before they make their purchases. Furthermore, we contend that it would be consistent with the passenger protections already put in place by DOT over the last year."

According to the GAO..."since the Tarmac Delay Rule went into effect in late April 2010, tarmac delays of more than 3 hours (180 minutes) have been nearly eliminated (see fig. 8, page 28). In the first 12 months since the rule went into effect, airlines reported tarmac delays of more than 3 hours for 20 flights, compared with 693 over the same period prior to the rule.<sup>54</sup> Airline consumer groups we spoke with strongly support the tarmac delay rule instituted by DOT."<sup>1</sup>

GAO's findings include<sup>2</sup>:

- Airports in rural communities have higher rates of delay and cancellation than airports in larger communities, and Department of Transportation (DOT) data provide an incomplete picture of this difference.
- DOT's tarmac delay rule has nearly eliminated tarmac delays of more than 3 hours, but GAO analysis suggests the rule is also correlated with a greater likelihood of flight cancellations.
- European Union requirements provide airline passengers with more extensive protections, such as care and compensation, than do U.S. or Canadian requirements, but these protections may increase costs for airlines and passengers, and can create enforcement challenges.

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<sup>1</sup> Government Accountability Office, "**Airline Passenger Protections: More Data and Analysis Needed to Understand Effects of Flight Delays**," (GAO-11-733), September 7, 2011, page 27.

<sup>2</sup> Government Accountability Office, "**Airline Passenger Protections: More Data and Analysis Needed to Understand Effects of Flight Delays**," (GAO-11-733), September 7, 2011, page 60.

**Association for Airline Passenger Rights (AAPR)**  
**PO Box 15275**  
**Washington, DC 20003**



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In response to these findings, GAO recommends that DOT:

- Collect and publicize more comprehensive data on airlines' on-time performance, and
- Assess the full range of the tarmac delay rule's costs and benefits and, if warranted, refine the rule's requirements and implementation.

The GAO report is available online at <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-11-733>.

For more information about the Association for Airline Passenger Rights or airline passenger protections, please visit [www.flyfriendlyskies.com](http://www.flyfriendlyskies.com) or contact AAPR directly at [info@flyfriendlyskies.com](mailto:info@flyfriendlyskies.com).

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**About AAPR:** 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.