
SENATE BILL 6269

State of Washington

60th Legislature

2008 Regular Session

By Senator Jacobsen

Read first time 01/14/08. Referred to Committee on Transportation.

1 AN ACT Relating to the rights of airline passengers; amending RCW
2 47.68.020; adding new sections to chapter 47.68 RCW; creating new
3 sections; and prescribing penalties.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds and declares that the
6 number of passenger complaints about the airline industry has increased
7 significantly. Further, the legislature is committed to airline
8 passenger policies that put the safety of all passengers first and
9 foremost, while not imposing unrealistic economic burdens that
10 adversely affect airline profitability or create exorbitant ticket
11 price increases.

12 **Sec. 2.** RCW 47.68.020 and 1993 c 208 s 4 are each amended to read
13 as follows:

14 As used in this chapter, unless the context clearly indicates
15 otherwise:

16 (1) "Aeronautics" means the science and art of flight and including
17 but not limited to transportation by aircraft; the operation,
18 construction, repair, or maintenance of aircraft, aircraft power plants

1 and accessories, including the repair, packing, and maintenance of
2 parachutes; the design, establishment, construction, extension,
3 operation, improvement, repair, or maintenance of airports or air
4 navigation facilities; and instruction in flying or ground subjects
5 pertaining thereto.

6 (2) "Aircraft" means any contrivance now known, or hereafter
7 invented, used or designed for navigation of or flight in the air.

8 (3) "Airline carrier" means any partnership, corporation, or
9 other business entity regulated by the federal aviation administration
10 that conducts scheduled passenger air transportation.

11 (4) "Airport" means any area of land or water which is used, or
12 intended for use, for the landing and take-off of aircraft, and any
13 appurtenant areas which are used, or intended for use, for airport
14 buildings or other airport facilities or right-of-way, together with
15 all airport buildings and facilities located thereon.

16 ((+4)) (5) "Department" means the state department of
17 transportation.

18 ((+5)) (6) "Office" means the office of the airline consumer
19 advocate as established in section 4 of this act.

20 (7) "Secretary" means the state secretary of transportation.

21 ((+6)) (8) "State" or "this state" means the state of Washington.

22 ((+7)) (9) "Air navigation facility" means any facility, other
23 than one owned or operated by the United States, used in, available for
24 use in, or designed for use in aid of air navigation, including any
25 structures, mechanisms, lights, beacons, markers, communicating
26 systems, or other instrumentalities or devices used or useful as an
27 aid, or constituting an advantage or convenience, to the safe taking-
28 off, navigation, and landing of aircraft, or the safe and efficient
29 operation or maintenance of an airport, and any combination of any or
30 all of such facilities.

31 ((+8)) (10) "Operation of aircraft" or "operate aircraft" means
32 the use, navigation, or piloting of aircraft in the airspace over this
33 state or upon any airport within this state.

34 ((+9)) (11) "Airman or airwoman" means any individual who engages,
35 as the person in command, or as pilot, mechanic, or member of the crew
36 in the navigation of aircraft while under way, and any individual who
37 is directly in charge of the inspection, maintenance, overhauling, or
38 repair of aircraft engines, airframes, propellers, or appliances, and

1 any individual who serves in the capacity of aircraft dispatcher or
2 air-traffic control tower operator; but does not include any individual
3 employed outside the United States, or any individual employed by a
4 manufacturer of aircraft, aircraft engines, airframes, propellers, or
5 appliances to perform duties as inspector or mechanic in connection
6 therewith, or any individual performing inspection or mechanical duties
7 in connection with aircraft owned or operated by the person.

8 ~~((+10+))~~ (12) "Aeronautics instructor" means any individual who for
9 hire or reward engages in giving instruction or offering to give
10 instruction in flying or ground subjects pertaining to aeronautics, but
11 excludes any instructor in a public school, university, or institution
12 of higher learning duly accredited and approved for carrying on
13 collegiate work, who instructs in flying or ground subjects pertaining
14 to aeronautics, while in the performance of his or her duties at such
15 school, university, or institution.

16 ~~((+11+))~~ (13) "Air school" means any person who advertises,
17 represents, or holds out as giving or offering to give instruction in
18 flying or ground subjects pertaining to aeronautics whether for or
19 without hire or reward; but excludes any public school, university, or
20 institution of higher learning duly accredited and approved for
21 carrying on collegiate work.

22 ~~((+12+))~~ (14) "Person" means any individual, firm, partnership,
23 corporation, company, association, joint stock association, or body
24 politic; and includes any trustee, receiver, assignee, or other similar
25 representative thereof.

26 ~~((+13+))~~ (15) "Municipal" means pertaining to a municipality, and
27 "municipality" means any county, city, town, authority, district, or
28 other political subdivision or public corporation of this state.

29 ~~((+14+))~~ (16) "Airport hazard" means any structure, object of
30 natural growth, or use of land, which obstructs the airspace required
31 for the flight of aircraft in landing or taking off at an airport or is
32 otherwise hazardous to such landing or taking off.

33 ~~((+15+))~~ (17) "State airway" means a route in the navigable
34 airspace over and above the lands or waters of this state, designated
35 by the department as a route suitable for air navigation.

36 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 47.68 RCW
37 to read as follows:

1 (1) Whenever airline passengers have boarded an aircraft and are
2 delayed more than three hours on the aircraft prior to takeoff, the
3 airline carrier shall ensure that passengers are provided for as needed
4 with:

5 (a) Electric generation service to provide temporary power for
6 fresh air and lights;

7 (b) Waste removal service for holding tanks of on-board restrooms;
8 and

9 (c) Access to medical attention, adequate food and drinking water,
10 and other refreshments.

11 (2) All airline carriers shall provide clear and conspicuous notice
12 on consumer complaint contact information by providing forms or posting
13 signs, or both, at all service desks and other appropriate areas as
14 necessary in an airport, which contain information in a form and manner
15 prescribed by the office including, but not limited to, the following:

16 (a) A telephone number and mailing address of the office, the
17 aviation consumer protection division, and the office of aviation
18 enforcement of the United States department of transportation;

19 (b) Explanations of the rights of airline passengers; and

20 (c) Basic information on the office.

21 (3) All airline carriers shall establish procedures to respond to
22 all passenger complaints within twenty-four hours of receipt and
23 appropriately resolve the complaints within two weeks of receipt.

24 (4) All airline carriers shall notify passengers within ten minutes
25 of a delay of known diversions and delays and cancellations transmitted
26 by airport overhead announcement on the aircraft announcement system
27 and by posting the delay or cancellation on airport television
28 monitors.

29 (5) All airline carriers shall establish procedures for returning
30 passengers to a terminal gate when delays occur to ensure that an
31 aircraft does not sit on the tarmac for longer than three hours without
32 connecting to a terminal gate.

33 (6) All airline carriers shall provide for the needs of elderly
34 passengers, passengers with disabilities, and passengers with special
35 needs by establishing procedures for assisting with moving and
36 retrieving baggage, and moving passengers from one area of the airport
37 to another at all times by airline carrier personnel.

1 (7) All airline carriers shall publish and update monthly on the
2 carrier's public web site a list of flights that are delayed thirty
3 minutes or more at least forty percent of the time during a single
4 month.

5 (8) All airline carriers shall compensate bumped passengers or
6 passengers delayed due to flight cancellations or postponements of over
7 twelve hours with a refund of one hundred fifty percent of the ticket
8 price.

9 (9) All airline carriers shall make lowest fare information,
10 schedules and itineraries, cancellation policies, and frequent flyer
11 program requirements available in an easily accessed location and shall
12 update all of this information frequently.

13 (10) All airline carriers shall ensure that baggage is handled
14 without delay or injury. If baggage is lost or misplaced, the airline
15 carrier shall notify the customer within twelve hours of the baggage
16 being reported lost or misplaced and compensate the consumer in an
17 amount equal to the current market value of the baggage and its
18 contents.

19 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** A new section is added to chapter 47.68 RCW
20 to read as follows:

21 (1) The office of the airline consumer advocate is created in the
22 attorney general's office. The attorney general shall designate one or
23 more employees to serve in the office.

24 (2) The office shall:

25 (a) Assist customers in resolving problems with airline carriers;

26 (b) Identify areas in which customers have problems in dealings
27 with airline carriers;

28 (c) Propose solutions, including administrative changes to
29 practices and procedures of the airline carrier or airport;

30 (d) Preserve and promote the rights of the customer;

31 (e) Promote open and direct communications; and

32 (f) In conjunction with appropriate staff of the attorney general,
33 initiate, investigate, attempt to resolve, and if necessary refer to
34 the attorney general any matters or complaints received under this
35 section.

36 (3)(a) Any complaints regarding violations of section 3 of this act

1 must be filed with the office who may, in conjunction with staff of the
2 attorney general, conduct an investigation and may request in writing
3 the production of documents and records as part of its investigation.

4 (b) At the conclusion of an investigation, the office shall either:

5 (i) Dismiss the complaint if it determines that a violation has not
6 occurred; or

7 (ii) Determine that a violation has likely occurred and, if so,
8 attempt to resolve the matter by settlement, which may include a
9 monetary settlement to cover the costs and expenses incurred by the
10 office in investigating the violation. If a settlement is not
11 achieved, then the matter must be referred to the attorney general for
12 further proceedings including, if necessary, legal action.

13 (c) The attorney general may recover a civil penalty not to exceed
14 one thousand dollars per violation, per passenger. The civil penalty
15 imposed under this section may be sought in a civil action brought by
16 the attorney general in any court of competent jurisdiction. If the
17 attorney general prevails in a civil action, the court may award the
18 attorney general reasonable attorneys' fees and an amount equal to the
19 costs and expenses incurred by the attorney general in investigating a
20 violation of section 3 of this act, as the court deems appropriate. If
21 the attorney general reaches a settlement, the settlement must include
22 an amount equal to the costs and expenses incurred by the attorney
23 general in investigating a violation of section 3 of this act.

24 (4) The office shall prepare an annual report that:

25 (a) Includes a summary of the activities of the office;

26 (b) Identifies the initiatives that the office has taken to improve
27 airline services;

28 (c) Contains a summary of the most serious problems encountered by
29 customers, including a description of the nature of these problems;

30 (d) Contains an inventory of the initiatives and problems described
31 in (b) and (c) of this subsection for which action has been taken, the
32 status and results of the actions taken, and an inventory of the
33 initiative and problems for which action has not been taken and the
34 reasons why action has not been taken;

35 (e) Contains recommendations for legislative or administrative
36 proposals appropriate to resolve problems encountered by customers; and

37 (f) Includes other information that the office deems advisable.

1 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** This act does not require an airline
2 carrier, airport, or other entity to take action in contravention of
3 any written directive of the federal aviation administration or other
4 federal agency having jurisdiction over the entity.

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** If any provision of this act or its
6 application to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the
7 remainder of the act or the application of the provision to other
8 persons or circumstances is not affected.

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