

**Consumer Federation of America
Consumers Union
FlyersRights.org
National Consumers League
Public Citizen
U.S. PIRG**

15 September 2009

**Support Strong Airline Passenger Rights,
Add Boxer-Snowe to Transportation Approps.**

Dear Senator,

In light of a summer of news reports that hours-long airline tarmac delays continue despite numerous airline industry promises, following several years of near-record airline delays, we are writing to express our support for the need to immediately move forward with a Transportation Appropriations bill that includes the Boxer-Snowe Airline Passenger Bill of Rights language that was passed by the Senate Commerce Committee as part of the FAA Reauthorization bill. It is critical that the Congress take immediate steps to provide passenger rights and improve safety for all airline passengers.

Too many passengers have been forced to endure near-record level delays, strandings, cancellations, and plunging airline customer service. While passengers have always feared being stranded on the tarmac without water or sanitary facilities, the problem has been exacerbated by reports of carriers neglecting to engage in essential maintenance and safety inspections. This year, the Airline Passengers Bill of Rights introduced by Senators Boxer and Snowe has been included in the FAA Reauthorization bill in its entirety.

The Boxer-Snowe Airline Passengers Bill of Rights would:

Require airlines to provide passengers with food, potable water, comfortable cabin temperature and ventilation, and adequate restrooms while a plane is delayed on the ground.

Require airlines to offer passengers the option of safely deplaning once they have sat on the ground for three hours after the plane door has closed. This option would be provided every three hours the plane continues to sit on the ground.

Make airports and airlines develop contingency plans for delayed flights to be reviewed and approved by DOT. The bill also allows the DOT to fine air carriers and airports that do not submit or fail to comply with contingency plans.

Direct the Department of Transportation (DOT) to create a consumer complaint hotline so that passengers can alert the agency about delays.

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The bill provides two exceptions to the three-hour option: the pilot may decide not to allow passengers to deplane if he or she believes their safety or security would be at risk due to weather or other emergencies. Additionally, the pilot may delay deplaning up to 30 minutes beyond the three-hour period if he or she reasonably believes the flight will depart within 30 minutes.

We all know that great strides have been taken towards an FAA Reauthorization bill and we applaud Congress for its hard work. But the timing of that bill is uncertain. But now, the job of providing passenger rights must be finished. We call upon the Senate to support adding Airline Passenger Rights language to Transportation Appropriations to help ensure the safety of passengers both on the ground and in the air.

Sincerely,

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