

U.S. Sen Baldwin: Reforms to protect rights of disabled airline passengers pass Congress

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FAA Reauthorization includes key provisions from Baldwin's legislation to ensure equal access to air travel

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin worked to include a number of key measures from her *Air Carrier Access Amendments Act* in the *FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018* to protect the rights of disabled airplane passengers and close service gaps that passengers with disabilities frequently encounter in air travel. The reforms included in the legislation passed the House and the Senate and now head to the President for his signature.

“In order to keep America’s promise of full equality for all, we must break down the barriers that individuals with disabilities and our veterans face when they travel,” **said Senator Baldwin.** “Equal access to air travel ensures individuals with disabilities are able to participate in today’s economy and enjoy their travel opportunities. I’m so proud that my work to protect the rights of every airplane passenger earned the support of my Congressional colleagues and I’m looking forward to the President signing this important legislation.”

“We applaud the bipartisan passage of this bill,” **said David Zurfluh, National President of Paralyzed Veterans of America.** “Problems with air travel are by far the most common complaints we hear from our members. This legislation is truly a move in the right direction, and we will continue to support efforts to prohibit discrimination and make America more accessible for all people with disabilities.”

“We appreciate efforts by Senator Baldwin and other Members of Congress to address concerns from the disability community about air travel. At The Arc Wisconsin, we believe air travel should be inclusive for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and this bill is a step in the right direction,” **said Lisa Pugh, State Director of The Arc of Wisconsin.**

“The passage of this bill is an exciting step forward for travelers with disabilities, who have long faced barriers to safe, accessible, and dignified air travel. Disability Rights Wisconsin thanks Senator Baldwin for her efforts in passing these much needed reforms. As a result of this bill, travelers with disabilities will now have increased protections for themselves and their equipment, and have meaningful recourse if something goes wrong,” **said Bill Crowley, Ombudsman at Disability Rights Wisconsin.**

Senator Baldwin’s efforts are supported by the American Association of People with Disabilities, American Council of the Blind, ACCESS, American Foundation for the Blind, Autistic Self Advocacy Network, Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation, Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund, Easterseals, Epilepsy Foundation, Muscular Dystrophy Association, National Association of the Deaf, National Association for Councils on Developmental Disabilities, National Council on Independent Living, National Disability Rights Network, National Multiple Sclerosis Society, The Arc, United Spinal Association, AMVETS, Blinded Veterans Association, Got Your 6, Paralyzed Veterans of America, The American Legion, VetsFirst, Vietnam Veterans of America, and the Wounded Warrior Project.

Senator Baldwin’s reforms included in the *FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018* will:

- Increase civil penalties for bodily harm to a passenger with a disability and damage to wheelchairs or other mobility aids;
- Require that DOT review, and if necessary, revise regulations ensuring passengers with disabilities receive dignified, timely and effective assistance at airports and on aircraft;
- Create the Advisory Committee on the Air Travel Needs of Passengers with Disabilities to identify barriers to air travel for individuals with disabilities and recommend consumer protection improvements;
- Require that the new Advisory Committee review airline practices for ticketing, preflight seat assignments and stowing of assistive devices, and make recommendations as needed;

- Mandate the DOT develop an Airline Passengers with Disabilities Bill of Rights, in consultation with stakeholders, describing rights of passengers with disabilities and responsibilities of air carriers; and
- Study In-Cabin Wheelchair Restraint Systems, in coordination with disability advocates, air carriers and aircraft manufacturers, on the ways in which individuals using wheelchairs can be accommodated with in-cabin wheelchair restraint systems.

For more than 30 years, the Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA) has prohibited discrimination based on disability in air travel. Despite this progress, many travelers with disabilities still encounter significant barriers when they travel by air including damaged equipment, delayed assistance and lack of seating accommodations. That's why [Senator Baldwin introduced the Air Carrier Access Amendments Act](#) last year to protect the rights of airline passengers with disabilities.

An online version of this release is available [here](#).