



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on November 25, 2011

More Fed. Gov't Regulation: Bill Would Ban Airline Luggage Fees

Entitled the Airline Passenger BASICS — Basic Airline Standards to Improve Customer Satisfaction — Landrieu's proposal permits passengers to check in a single piece of luggage and carry on an additional one free of charge, as long as the two items are within the size limits. It also mandates that airlines provide free access to water and restrooms, imposing a penalty on any airline which fails to comply.



In a statement, Landrieu commented,

When an airline advertises a flight, that is how much it should cost, plain and simple. Passengers should not be charged additional fees for checked or carry-on baggage, drinkable water or other reasonable requests.

Air travel can be a stressful experience for many reasons, but unfair fees for basic amenities should not be one of them. Passengers have been nicked and dimed for far too long and something has to be done about it. Air carriers should be required to provide a minimum standard of service to their passengers or face additional fees — that is what the Airline Passenger BASICS Act and the FAIR Act will do.

As noted on the Florida Senator's website, in 2008 airlines began charging fees for checked and carry-on baggage, for reservation changes and cancellations, as well as for additional amenities such as pillows and snacks. Between 2008-09, airlines collected approximately \$4 billion in change/cancellation fees, and \$3.9 billion in checked baggage fees. The charges, which have expectedly decreased checked luggage by 20 percent, naturally have also significantly increased the number of carry-on bags.

Sen. Landrieu asserted,

Many airlines consider checking a bag not to be a right, but a privilege — and one with a hefty fee attached. The Airline Passenger BASICS Act will guarantee passengers one checked bag without the financial burden of paying a fee, or the headache of trying to fit everything into a carry-on.

Critics of the bill note its similarities to the Durbin amendment of the Dodd-Frank bill, which attempted to vilify banks for issuing monthly debit card fees, even though the proposed fees were a result of new government regulations that made debit transactions even more expensive for banks. Kate Hicks of Townhall [opined](#):

Landrieu's bill is political pandering based in anti-business rhetoric, not fact. The Democrats cry "profiteering" over costs they deem "unfair," when in reality, they're frequently targeting reasonable businesses' cost-covering measures. Besides, how absurd that in the wake of the



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supercommittee's humiliating failure, the Democrats introduce more regulations designed to demonize business and ultimately inconvenience all consumers.

According to the spokesman for the Air Transport Association (ATA), Steve Lott, the entire proposal is a step backward. "Most in Congress understand that the airline industry was deregulated more than 30 years ago and the government should not mandate what products and services a deregulated industry should offer customers," he declared.

Likewise, Lott noted that despite the good intentions of the legislation, it will actually cause a backlash for passengers, because it will force airlines to raise the prices of their flights, rather than imposing fees on just those who are checking items.

Fox News explains:

The industry started charging for checked bags to deal with rising jet [fuel](#) costs and a weak economy. According to industry estimates released this month, the average price of a gallon of jet fuel rose from just over \$1 between 2001 and 2005 to more than \$3 in late 2011. According to the Air Transport Association, airfare alone does not cover the operating cost of a [flight](#).

This revelation prompted Townhall's Hicks to observe, "Once again, the Democrats illustrate their minimal understanding of the economy." She added,

Landrieu's "quick fix" legislation is a superficial attempt to garner favor with voters and demonize an entire industry. Under the auspices of protecting consumers, she would harm, rather than help us by driving up ticket costs for everyone — after all, airlines have to cover the increased cost of jet fuel somehow.

Lott also questioned why Congress would target a fee in the airline industry which is a common practice in most other industries. "You don't get one free Coke at your hotel when you check in," she pointed out.

Landrieu defended her bill to Congress, citing a U.S. Travel Association survey in which nearly three-quarters of respondents said that their top concern was that people are bringing too many carry-on bags through security, presumably to avoid paying baggage fees for checked items.

The increase in carry-on items has resulted in too much clutter in the overhead bins and longer lines at security checkpoints. More importantly, as an aide for Sen. Landrieu noted, "There's an increased cost because of this, for security to scan all these bags." The aide asserted that these additional costs — \$260 million according to the Department of Homeland Security — are a prime reason for the legislation.

ATA's Lott contends, however, that well before the increase in carry-on baggage, there were long lines at security checkpoints — the result of TSA requirements that passengers remove their shoes and a variety of other items. "That is the reason lines have slowed down," Lott asserts.

Analysts have noted that if the federal government is interested in saving money, the better approach would be to deregulate domestic energy production, thereby lowering the cost of jet fuel — allowing airlines to remove their baggage fees, and thus reducing TSA costs.



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