

The Hon. James L. Oberstar
Chairman
House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Hon. Jerry F. Costello
Chairman
Subcommittee on Aviation
House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
2251 Rayburn House Office Building
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Dear Chairman Oberstar and Chairman Costello:

As you continue to work on legislation to reauthorize the Federal Aviation Administration, I would like to provide an update on the position of The American Society of Travel Agents with respect to a back-to-gate time limit.

One of the recommendations of the National Task Force to Develop Model Contingency Plans to Deal with Lengthy Airline On-Board Ground Delays (Tarmac Delay Task Force), on which I served, was that each airline be permitted to establish its own time limit at each airport for deplaning passengers who have been subjected to lengthy delays. In addition, the Task Force recommended that delayed passengers be provided with "regular and timely information" concerning the reason for such delays.

In the face of continuing delays and the evident lack of concrete efforts on the part of the airlines to create a meaningful solution thereto, and absent a robust reporting mechanism that would compel airlines and airports to report back to the Department of Transportation on their actual progress in implementing the recommendations in the Task Force's final report, we see little hope for real progress in this area without further action from Congress.

Therefore, we respectfully ask that you establish a clear standard for the airlines to follow. A Congressionally-defined standard will not in itself solve the inexorable problem of chronic flight delays, but it will surely represent an improvement over the current system, in which people are trapped on planes without adequate supplies for hours on end.

Respectfully Submitted,

Paul M. Ruden
Senior Vice President &
Member of the Task Force