

The Hon. John D. Rockefeller IV
Chairman
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation
254 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Hon. Kay Bailey Hutchison
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation
560 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Hon. Byron L. Dorgan
Chairman
Subcommittee on Aviation Operations, Safety, and Security
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation
254 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Hon. Jim DeMint
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Aviation Operations, Safety, and Security
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation
560 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

23 July 2009

Dear Senators Rockefeller, Hutchison, Dorgan, and DeMint:

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



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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