



# Duckworth Joins Baldwin To Introduce Legislation to Protect Rights of Airline Passengers with Disabilities

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– U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) joined Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) last week in reintroducing the *Air Carrier Access Amendments Act* to protect the rights of airplane passengers with disabilities, improve air travel safety and close service gaps that passengers with disabilities frequently encounter in air travel. Companion legislation was introduced in the House of Representatives by Congressman Jim Langevin (D-RI).

**"Far too many Americans living with a disability - many of whom are Veterans like myself - face unnecessary challenges during air travel,"** said Duckworth. **"As someone who has experienced these challenges firsthand, I understand how lackluster accessibility can have a profound effect on disabled travelers. This legislation will go a long way to correct these issues and ensure disabled Americans receive the protections they deserve."**

**"We need to break down the barriers that individuals with disabilities and our veterans face when they travel,"** said Senator Baldwin. **"Equal access to air travel for individuals with disabilities is about fairness and freedom. This legislation will enhance the rights and safety of airline passengers with disabilities, including our veterans."**

**"As a quadriplegic, I am all too familiar with the obstacles people with disabilities encounter when flying,"** said Congressman Langevin. **"All Americans deserve equal access to the skies, and I am proud to introduce this legislation in the House to fight discrimination and ensure passengers with disabilities are able to fly with dignity."**

For more than 30 years, the Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA) has prohibited discrimination based on disability in air travel. Despite this progress, too many travelers

with disabilities encounter significant barriers—such as damaged assistive devices and wheelchairs, delayed assistance, ineffective communications, and lack of seating accommodations.

In 2016, passengers filed 32,445 disability-related complaints with air carriers, which represents an approximately 5 percent increase over 2015. The majority of these complaints were related to failure to provide assistance and seating accommodation.

The Air Carrier Access Amendments Act is supported by Paralyzed Veterans of America, AMVETS, Blinded Veterans Association, The American Legion, Vietnam Veterans of America, VetsFirst, Wounded Warrior Project, American Association of People with Disabilities, American Council of the Blind, The Arc of the United States, 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 Council on Independent Living, National Disability Rights Network, National Federation of the Blind, National Multiple Sclerosis Society, and the United Spinal Association.

The Air Carrier Access Amendments Act will:

Strengthen ACAA enforcement by requiring referral of certain passenger-filed complaints to the Department of Justice and establishment of a private right of action;

- Ensure new airplanes are designed to accommodate the needs of people with disabilities by requiring airlines to meet defined accessibility standards. These standards will address safe and effective boarding and deplaning, visually accessible announcements, seating accommodations, lavatories, and better stowage options for assistive devices;
- Require removal of access barriers on existing airplanes to the extent that it is readily achievable, easily accomplishable, and may be done without much difficulty or expense; and
- Improve the overall safety of air travel for passengers with disabilities.

The legislation is cosponsored by Senators Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Maggie Hassan (D-NH), Ed Markey (D-MA) and Jeff Merkley (D-OR). More information is available [here](#).

Senator Duckworth has long been an advocate in ensuring equal access to air travel for all individuals and last year she worked with Senator Baldwin to include a number of

key measures in the *FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018* to protect the rights of disabled airplane passengers and close service gaps.