

Accessible Air Travel: Hill Day Fact Sheet



This year, the Federal Aviation Act must be reauthorized by Congress before September 30, 2023; without the Act, nobody can fly. This Act, reauthorized every five years, allows Congress to reform nearly everything related to air travel, including accessibility standards. Consequently, this year's FAA reauthorization is THE BEST opportunity we have to make air travel more accessible for people with disabilities.

Obviously, much needs to be done to make air travel accessible. That is why we have five overarching priorities:

1. Make Airplanes More Accessible
2. Ensure the Safety of Air Travelers with Disabilities:
3. Minimize Damage to Wheelchairs and Other Mobility Devices:
4. Hold Airlines Accountable for Broken, Damaged, or Lost Wheelchairs and Violations of Passenger Rights
5. Give the Disability Community a Seat at the Table

Remember, your ask to Congress will be: **Please make air travel accessibility a top priority by supporting the inclusion of accessibility provisions in this year's FAA reauthorization.**

Below are each of these priorities with the specific reforms we are pursuing:

1. **Make Airplanes More Accessible:**

- The FAA Reauthorization should require the continued study of the feasibility of wheelchair spots on aircraft, as well as a roadmap for implementation.
- New airplanes should be designed to meet accessibility standards that address safe and effective boarding and deplaning, accessible announcements, seating accommodations, and better stowage options for assistive devices

2. **Ensure the Safety of Air Travelers with Disabilities:**

- Require standardized and hands-on training and certification to anyone who provides assistance to passengers with disabilities, especially those who assist with seat transfers.
- Require aircraft evacuation plans to account for passengers with disabilities.

3. Minimize Damage to Wheelchairs and Other Mobility Devices:

- Airlines should be required to publish information on the size of cargo holds, as well as airline policies for traveling with a wheelchair.
- All baggage handlers and ramp agents who disassemble, load, and stow wheelchairs or other mobility devices in the cargo hold for flight should receive standardized hands-on training.

4. Hold Airlines Accountable for Broken, Damaged, or Lost Wheelchairs and Violations of Passenger Rights:

- Passengers should be able to sue airlines when their rights are violated (a private right of action), as proposed in the Air Carrier Access Amendments Act.
- We need greater transparency from the Department of Transportation (DOT) on when they hold airlines accountable for broken, damaged, or lost wheelchairs. Currently the DOT rarely uses its enforcement authority, and we want a report to Congress on why.

5. Give the Disability Community a Seat at the Table

- Reauthorize the ACAA Advisory Committee so we ensure that the Department of Transportation continues to receive insights and expertise as they craft new regulations for accessible air travel.
- Establish an FAA Center of Excellence for Accessible Air Travel to bring together expertise and knowledge from all stakeholders to advance accessible air travel.

Remember, this document is for you! Each of these proposals are included in the one-page document you will be handing to the legislative staff you will be meeting with.

Additionally, in your folders, you have MDA's February comments to Congress which outlines these proposals in greater, wonkier detail. Don't worry about knowing the details, but if you're curious, that's where to find them.

Any questions? Contact Michael Lewis, MDA's Director, Disability Policy, at mlewis@mdausa.org or 540-447-9438.