



Association of Professional Flight Attendants

Office of the National President

April 10, 2018

Senator Richard Burr
Russell Senate Office Building
217 Constitution Ave NE
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Burr:

The Association of Professional Flight Attendants (APFA), the largest independent Flight Attendant union in the world, strongly endorses the bill on service animal behavior training that defines and strengthens the definition of “service animals” that are allowed to accompany passengers on commercial aircraft. This bill closes a loophole that has been exploited and will ultimately make passengers safer. In the name of maintaining a safe and comfortable environment for both passengers and crew members, APFA strongly supports setting standards for service animal training and behavior.

APFA has flight attendant domiciles in both Raleigh-Durham and Charlotte where 2,500 American Airlines flight attendants are based. We are particularly pleased that you have taken the lead on this issue.

As safety professionals, our members serve as problem solvers and mediators on 6,700 flights carrying 530,000 passengers worldwide each day. Flight attendants are trained in medical, fire, security, turbulence and emergency evacuations. Safety is the top priority for every flight attendant and no two flights present the same combination of safety and customer service challenges. In recent years, the number of animals described as “service animals” has greatly increased. We have seen a variety of both domesticated and wild animals including dogs, cats, birds, monkeys, chickens, a kangaroo, a penguin and a miniature pony all brought into the aircraft cabin under the guise of being a “service” or “emotional support” animal. This has led to a variety of issues inflight that are not readily solvable in a small, contained cabin at 35,000 feet where resources are limited. In recent months the public has been made aware of a variety of service animals onboard, but flight attendants know this has been an issue for some time. Service and emotional support animals have been known to bite passengers and flight attendants, urinate,

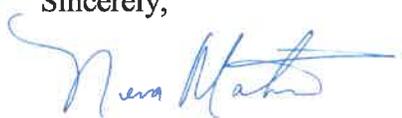
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defecate, cause allergic reactions and encroach on the space and comfort zone of other passengers. Oftentimes, the role of the service animals is unclear and many are un- or undertrained. In the event of an emergency evacuation an untrained animal could put people's lives at risk.

Many flight attendants are pet owners and animal lovers; however, APFA strongly believes that in a small, contained and public space it is not appropriate to have un- or undertrained service animals. As the airlines figure out more ways to add passengers on each flight, there is not adequate space for service animals that are not specifically trained and certified to assist. This is precisely why APFA strongly supports this legislation which would narrow the types of service animals that are allowed on commercial aircraft by aligning the Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA) definition of service animals to what it is defined under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

We commend you in your efforts to keep American aviation safe and comfortable for the millions of traveling passengers and thousands of working crew members. This legislation is long overdue.

Sincerely,



Nena Martin
APFA National President