



The Association of Service Dog Providers for Military Veterans is a coalition of non-profit service dog providers for military Veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress, traumatic brain injury, and military sexual trauma working to prevent suicide and improve military Veterans' mental health.

March 28, 2018

Office of Senator Richard Burr
Russell Senate Office Building
217 Constitution Ave NE,
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Burr:

The Association of Service Dog Providers for Military Veterans submits this letter as a gesture of support for your proposed measures in the 2018 Federal Aviation Authority ("FAA") reauthorization. As you may know, our association is comprised of several dedicated organizations that prime, train, and issue service dogs to disabled American veterans.

According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, roughly 23 percent of female servicemembers reported suffering from a sexual assault while enlisted, and between 15-20 percent of all military veterans suffer from Posttraumatic Stress Disorder. To alleviate the burden bared by these servicemembers, our member organizations subscribe to one shared mission: equip returning American veterans with a treatment solution that empowers them to readjust to society.

In recent years, an influx of "fake service dogs" has endangered the serviceability of our highly-trained canine partners. Our country's restaurants, hotels, stores, and airlines have experienced a profusion of "fake service dogs" that are either improperly trained, or indecorously designated as a service animal by individuals falsely claiming to have a disability. These improprieties directly impact graduates of our member associations' programs, especially those suffering from invisible wounds, who now face harassment and troubling lines of inquiry about the validity of their conditions.

Specifically, we support the following amendments included in your proposed legislation:

1. Amend the definition of a "service animal" under the Air Carriers Accessibility Act ("ACAA")¹ to align with the corresponding definition in the Americans With Disabilities Act² and associated regulations;
2. Make it illegal under 18 U.S.C. § 1001 for an individual to knowingly and willfully make a false statement for the purpose of seeking accommodation involving an animal from a commercial air carrier; and

Our association offers wholehearted support for these two proposed changes. By our estimation, both proposed changes would effectively curb the number of fake and/or poorly trained service dogs and, consequently, improve both the overall experience and ease of public access to airlines for graduates of our member organizations' programs.

Yet, we must express our concerns regarding the proposed measure to establish a standard of service animal behavior training for individuals seeking accommodation under the ACAA. We do, however, support the "National Standard" established by our organization, the Association of Service Dog Providers for Military Veterans. Our association is the only nationwide organization solely dedicated to instituting admissible standards for training service dogs; the standards, which were meticulously drafted in coordination with both industry experts and veterans, ensure that service dogs and their veteran partners possess advanced dexterity upon the completion of training. Therefore, we would not support the adoption of a standard derived from any entity or process to which we would have no input.

We thank you for your continued efforts on this important issue and look forward to working together on behalf of our disabled veterans.

Regards,

Ms. Jordan Kaye Colvin
Executive Director
The Association of Service Dog Providers for Military Veterans

