

OBERSTAR URGED TO GIVE STRANDED AIRLINE PASSENGERS RELIEF
AS PART OF \$500M INSURANCE SUBSIDY

WASHINGTON – The head of the nation’s leading passenger rights organization today urged Congressman James Oberstar (DFL-MN) to give relief to stranded airline passengers as part of emergency legislation re-authorizing the Federal Aviation Administration. The bill, under the jurisdiction of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure which Oberstar chairs, gives the airlines \$500 million in taxpayer-funded “war insurance,” but doesn’t contain an Airline Passengers’ Bill of Rights giving relief to stranded flyers stuck inside the aircraft indefinitely while planes’ departures are delayed.

“The airlines’ lobbyists and campaign donations shouldn’t buy them a seat in First Class while passengers who are stuck back in coach – for eight or nine hours at a time,” said Kate Hanni, President of Flyersrights.org (<http://www.flyersrights.org>).

“Today, the airlines can keep you stranded indefinitely in a sealed metal tube, and there’s nothing you can do about it. We’re only asking that after three hours, they take you back to the terminal and let you get some fresh air, food, fresh water and a toilet that works. We urge Congressman Oberstar, as chair of the Transportation Committee, to use his influence to give relief to these stranded passengers as part of emergency legislation now before his Committee to reauthorize the Federal Aviation Administration.”

Hanni explained that Congress must enact an emergency extension of legislation reauthorizing the FAA by September 30, or the Agency must legally shut its doors. The airlines, which spent \$16 million this year alone on lobbying, according to <http://www.opensecrets.org>, have obtained an amendment to the measure granting them \$500 million in insurance guarantees against future acts of terrorism. Congress has so far refused, however, to include provisions creating a “Passengers’ Bill of Rights,” requiring that passengers be allowed to get off their aircraft after three hours of delay.

Hanni, a private citizen who formed flyersrights.org after being forced to sit for 9 hours waiting for her flight to take off, urged passengers to call Congressman Oberstar at 202-225-3121 and tell him, “if the taxpayers can give the airlines \$500 million, then the airlines can let us off their planes after 3 hours on the runway.”

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