

Association of Flight Attendants-CWA Securing Carry-on Baggage

The Association of Flight Attendants-CWA strongly supports H.R. 2870, the Securing Carry-on Baggage Act, which would set a limit of one carry-on bag plus one personal item per passenger allowed onboard aircraft. This bill creates a uniform, enforceable rule and increases and enhances security screening actions as well as creates international harmonization of security measures. **The rule would limit passengers to one carry-on item with a loaded size limit of 50 linear inches plus one personal item.** H.R. 2870 aims to reduce the number and size of baggage passing through the TSA security check points and creates a uniform approach to storing baggage brought into the cabin

Current guidelines for carry-on bags were established more than two decades ago when air travel was much different than today. Carriers had to implement individual programs to control the weight, size and number of carry-on bags. This creates a maze of varying carrier programs making it difficult and confusing for passengers especially in this era of code share and global alliance partners.

Overly large and bulky carry-on bags have been a longstanding problem for several decades. With the recent introduction of checked baggage fees, this difficult problem has now become a literal crisis. Imposing an enforceable standard for carry-on sizes proposed in this bill will enhance airline safety and security. Carry-on baggage will be smaller and less bulky making it easier to enhance detection of prohibited items. TSA employee's opportunities of focusing and finding the "needle in the haystack" would be greatly increased by limiting large and bulky carry-on bag sizes.

Bigger, bulkier bags threaten overall in-flight safety. These large and heavy bags crammed into the overhead bins creates a pressure on the bin latches, which increases the possibility that they may open during a rough landing or turbulence resulting in items falling out and injuring passengers and or flight attendants.

Standardized and smaller bags will also help airlines improve on-time performance. Smaller and standard bag sizes will accommodate more passengers' carry-on baggage. Overstuffed bags cannot be accommodated in the storage location under the seats in front of passenger. Once the overhead bins are full these larger bulkier bags will need to be checked prior to closing the aircraft door. The time it takes to check these larger bulkier bags leads to delays. Smaller, standardized bags will help ensure that passengers will be able to accommodate their allowable bag amounts of one carry-on plus one personal item in the overhead bins and under seat storage areas.

This bill increases passenger safety in an emergency evacuation. A 2000 National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) report on emergency evacuations noted that passengers will attempt to retrieve their bags, even after being instructed to leave personal items behind. While this behavior is not the safest, a bigger, bulkier bag is likely more difficult to remove from the overhead bin costing valuable seconds. A smaller bag in contrast is easier and quicker to remove, even when advised not to do so. At an emergency exit if a flight attendant must grab carry-on baggage from a passenger to facilitate a speedy evacuation it will be easier for flight attendants to grab smaller bags from passengers and clear the exit versus larger bags.