

U.S. SENATOR BOB CASEY



RANKING MEMBER *Special Committee on Aging*

Airline Information and Entertainment Access Act

Why do we need the Airline Information and Entertainment Access Act?

All airline passengers deserve access to in-flight information and entertainment options that are made available to paying customers, regardless of their disability. Access to airline services is not subject to requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Instead airlines are subject to the regulations of the Air Carriers Access Act (ACAA) of 1986 and its amendments. The ACAA, as amended, does not address requirements for access to information or entertainment for people with disabilities. On many flights, much of the information provided to passengers comes from shared or seat-back video displays. If you are a person with a sensory disability (e.g., blindness, deafness) you should have access to safety information and the entertainment available to all other passengers. Currently, there is no standardization of accessible content provided for people with sensory disabilities on shared or individual displays on airplanes. Setting such standards will benefit everyone, including airlines.

What will the Airline Information and Entertainment Access Act do?

The Airline Information and Entertainment Access Act (AIEAA) will ensure equal access to safety information announcements, general in-flight announcements, and entertainment services for all airline passengers regardless of their disabilities. The Act will:

- Requires a captioning option on all videos displaying safety information and entertainment programming on any air carrier.
- Requires an American Sign Language option on videos displaying in-flight information or entertainment programming on any air carrier.
- Requires air carriers to ensure audio descriptions of videos are available for people with disabilities.
- Requires that controls systems for video displays have a nonvisual operating option.

Cosponsors: Senators Baldwin (D-WI), Markey (D-MA), Brown (D-OH), Duckworth (D-IL), Blumenthal (D-CT)

Supporters: National Association of the Deaf (NAD), Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD), American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD), Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN), Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), The Arc of the United States, Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, American Council of the Blind (ACB), National Council on Independent Living (NCIL), Pennsylvania Society for the Advancement of the Deaf and the Programs of the Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf, The National Federation of the Blind (NFB).

Section-by-Section Summary

Section 1 – Title

- Airline Information and Entertainment Access Act

Section 2, a – d

(a) Accessibility of in-flight entertainment programming: Requires airlines to provide open and closed captioning options on individual and shared visual displays that show in-flight information and entertainment programming to help ensure access for people with disabilities, specifically those with sensory disabilities. Requires airlines to include American Sign Language as a language option for video information and entertainment systems.

(b) Enforcement and Civil Action: The Attorney General must implement the requirements of the act no later than 180 days after enactment. An individual who has been aggrieved by an airline failing to meet the requirements has up to two years to bring a civil action against the airline.

(c) Establishment of standards for operation of individual video displays: Within 18 months, the Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board must prescribe the standards for video display controls. The Secretary of Transportation will prescribe regulations for video display controls based on the Access Board standards.

(d) Definitions: Definitions are provided for open and closed captioning and video descriptions of in-flight information and entertainment programming. A definition for visually displayed airline information and entertainment programming is also provided. Person with a disability is defined as in the Americans with Disabilities Act as amended.