

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS AS CARRY-ON LUGGAGE

ACTION NEEDED

We urge Congress to:

- **Enact S. 1451, the FAA Air Transportation Modernization and Safety Improvement Act, which sets a uniform national policy for all airlines regarding musical instruments as carry-on luggage on airplanes.**

TALKING POINTS

- **Musicians make their livelihood from their instruments. If musicians cannot carry their instruments on airplanes, they miss their engagements.** Many instruments are too delicate and valuable to be checked as luggage. They must be carried on board the airplane. Without their own instruments—the tools of their trade on which they regularly rehearse and perform—musicians are unable to perform. Substituting instruments upon arrival at a new destination is simply not an option.
- **A uniform policy would greatly benefit musicians.** Currently, airline policies vary widely, with each individual airline responsible for adopting and enforcing its own policy regarding carry-on luggage and checked baggage. This makes it more difficult for musicians to know what to expect when they travel.
- **S. 1451 institutes a uniform national carry-on policy that takes musicians' needs into consideration.** Language has been included in both versions of the FAA reauthorization bill this year to address the carry-on issue. The Senate version, S. 1451, allows any instrument to be carried on board that can fit in an overhead bin or under the seat, while the House of Representatives' version, H.R. 915, contains language that is less favorable.

BACKGROUND

Currently, each airline has a different policy regarding the size of an instrument that can be stored in the overhead bin of an airplane. In addition, the application of these policies by airline personnel is arbitrary and capricious. As a result, many musicians must choose at the last moment to cancel their flight and miss their engagement because of the fear that their instruments will be damaged if they are checked.

The Senate FAA bill, S. 1451, introduced by Sens. Rockefeller (D-WV), Dorgan (D-ND), DeMint (R-SC), and Hutchison (R-TX), would eliminate this situation by allowing all musical instruments that can fit into the overhead bin or beneath the seat of an airplane to be allowed on board. S. 1451 is within the jurisdiction of two committees, the Senate Commerce Committee and the Senate Finance Committee. In addition to the carry-on policy for small instruments, S. 1451 also has provisions for oversized instruments. A musician can either buy a seat on the airplane for a large instrument like the cello, or choose to check the instrument.

Airline policies limiting the in-cabin transportation of musical instruments are not related in any way to security concerns following September 11, 2001. In fact, in 2002, the Department of Homeland Security's Transportation Security Administration (TSA) instituted a specific policy allowing passengers to carry one musical instrument in addition to one carry-on and one personal item through screening checkpoints. The airlines have no security reason for imposing arbitrary and unreasonable restrictions on the transport of musical instruments.