

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 11, 2017

The Honorable Elaine Chao
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Chao,

We write with questions based on concerns related to an incident that took place aboard United Airlines (United) flight 3411 while on the ground at Chicago O'Hare International Airport (O'Hare) on Sunday, April 9, 2017.

Initial reports of the incident show that United asked for four passengers, who had already boarded the plane, to volunteer to take a flight the following day in order to accommodate four United employees. After being selected randomly by computer, one male passenger refused to exit the plane, at which point law enforcement personnel were called to the scene.

Videos posted online show the male passenger, upon refusing to deboard the plane, being forcibly and violently removed from his seat by law enforcement personnel. The passenger, apparently unconscious with blood on his face, was subsequently dragged from the plane.

Due to the serious nature of this incident and the way in which it was handled both by the airline and law enforcement at O'Hare, we request answers to the following questions:

1. What steps could have been taken by United to ensure the issues related to the prioritization of crew travel on flight 3411 could have been mitigated before passengers actually boarded the plane?
2. What specific guidelines or recommendations, if any, does the Department of Transportation provide to airlines in the situation where an airline determines it is necessary to ask passengers who have already boarded to exit the plane in order to accommodate airline crew travel?
3. What protocol, if any, are local law enforcement personnel and airline employees required to follow when it is determined necessary to forcibly remove a passenger from a flight, particularly when such action is due to a crew travel decision made by the airline?
4. Were any Federal laws or regulations violated with regard to the manner in which the male passenger in this incident was physically handled?

The April 9th incident has resulted in much of the flying public having sincere concerns with how a decision made by an airline to prioritize crew travel could lead to a violent confrontation between a passenger and law enforcement. Particularly in light of Congress's upcoming opportunity to reauthorize Federal aviation policy, we request answers to these questions in order to provide clarity into the situation and to help prevent similar incidents from occurring in the future.

Thank you for your time and consideration of these important questions.

Sincerely,


Rodney Davis
Member of Congress


Daniel Lipinski
Member of Congress