

## Mahoney Fights to Cut Baggage Fees for Troops flying on Military Orders

(West Palm Beach, FL) - Today, Congressman Mahoney (FL-16) called on the Department of Defense and the Air Transport Association of America to work out an agreement to ensure that soldiers fulfilling travel orders will no longer have to pay extra fees for carrying their military equipment. Mahoney issued the letter before this morning's press conference, held at Palm Beach International Airport with Congressman Ron Klein (FL-22) and local Veterans.

Congressman, local Veterans call on DoD

(August 15, 2008)

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It was recently reported that an Army National Guard Staff Sergeant headed for training before deploying to Iraq was charged \$100 by American Airlines to check an additional bag containing military-issued equipment. All major carriers currently waive fees for up to two pieces of baggage for military personnel traveling under orders however, it is the industry standard to charge \$100 for a third piece of baggage. Although American Airlines announced yesterday that it would waive fees for a third checked bag for all active-duty service members, other airlines continue to charge active-duty service members for additional baggage.

Text of Congressman Mahoney's letter to Secretary Gates:

Honorable Robert Gates

Secretary of Defense

Office of the Secretary

The Pentagon

Washington DC 20301-1155

Dear Secretary Gates:

I am writing to express my deep concern about recent news reports that our military personnel traveling on orders are being charged baggage fees by some commercial airlines. This news raises a bigger question as to why our military men and woman are being asked to finance the Department of Defense at all.

We have been told that the policy of the Department is to reimburse for baggage fees and incidental, out-of-pocket travel expenses such as meals. I believe that our military personnel traveling on orders should not have to concern themselves with paying baggage fees, keeping track of receipts, and waiting for reimbursements.

If the Department of Defense chooses to send our military personnel traveling on orders via commercial airlines, they should be afforded the same services and amenities as if they were traveling via military transport. They should not incur the financial hardship of paying out-of pocket expenses.

I, therefore, request that the Department of Defense stop this practice and change its policy with regards to the purchase of transportation services from commercial airlines. Given the stress our military families' are under, a continuation of this policy places an unnecessary burden on our troops when they travel to their training and/or deployment sites. Should this situation not be remedied in the near future, I am fully prepared to initiate legislation that will do so.

I, along with the citizens I represent, support our military. As a member of Congress, it is my responsibility to ensure that the Federal Government is doing everything possible to support our troops. Any lack of action on my part in this matter would not only violate my personal convictions but would be a breach of trust with my constituents.

Thank you in advance for giving your personal attention to this very important matter.

Sincerely,

Tim Mahoney

Member of Congress

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