

105TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 100

To amend title 49, United States Code, to provide protection for airline employees who provide certain air safety information, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JANUARY 21, 1997

Mr. KERRY introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Labor and Human Resources

A BILL

To amend title 49, United States Code, to provide protection for airline employees who provide certain air safety information, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Aviation Safety Protec-
5 tion Act of 1997”.

6 **SEC. 2. PROTECTION OF EMPLOYEES PROVIDING AIR SAFE-** 7 **TY INFORMATION.**

8 (a) GENERAL RULE.—Chapter 421 of title 49, Unit-
9 ed States Code, is amended by adding at the end the fol-
10 lowing new subchapter:

1 “SUBCHAPTER III—WHISTLEBLOWER
2 PROTECTION PROGRAM
3 **“§ 42121. Protection of employees providing air safety**
4 **information**

5 “(a) DISCRIMINATION AGAINST AIRLINE EMPLOY-
6 EES.—No air carrier or contractor or subcontractor of an
7 air carrier may discharge an employee of the air carrier
8 or the contractor or subcontractor of an air carrier or oth-
9 erwise discriminate against any such employee with re-
10 spect to compensation, terms, conditions, or privileges of
11 employment because the employee (or any person acting
12 pursuant to a request of the employee)—

13 “(1) provided, caused to be provided, or is
14 about to provide or cause to be provided to the Fed-
15 eral Government information relating to air safety
16 under this subtitle or any other law of the United
17 States;

18 “(2) has filed, caused to be filed, or is about to
19 file or cause to be filed a proceeding relating to air
20 carrier safety under this subtitle or any other law of
21 the United States;

22 “(3) testified or is about to testify in such a
23 proceeding; or

24 “(4) assisted or participated or is about to as-
25 sist or participate in such a proceeding.

1 “(b) DEPARTMENT OF LABOR COMPLAINT PROCE-
2 DURE.—

3 “(1) FILING AND NOTIFICATION.—

4 “(A) IN GENERAL.—In accordance with
5 this paragraph, a person may file (or have a
6 person file on behalf of that person) a com-
7 plaint with the Secretary of Labor if that per-
8 son believes that an air carrier or contractor or
9 subcontractor of an air carrier discharged or
10 otherwise discriminated against that person in
11 violation of subsection (a).

12 “(B) REQUIREMENTS FOR FILING COM-
13 PLAINTS.—A complaint referred to in subpara-
14 graph (A) may be filed not later than 180 days
15 after an alleged violation occurs. The complaint
16 shall state the alleged violation.

17 “(C) NOTIFICATION.—Upon receipt of a
18 complaint submitted under subparagraph (A),
19 the Secretary of Labor shall notify the air car-
20 rier, contractor, or subcontractor named in the
21 complaint and the Administrator of the Federal
22 Aviation Administration of the—

23 “(i) filing of the complaint;

24 “(ii) allegations contained in the com-
25 plaint;

1 “(iii) substance of evidence supporting
2 the complaint; and

3 “(iv) opportunities that are afforded
4 to the air carrier, contractor, or sub-
5 contractor under paragraph (2).

6 “(2) INVESTIGATION; PRELIMINARY ORDER.—

7 “(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 60
8 days after receiving a complaint under para-
9 graph (1), and after affording the air carrier,
10 contractor, or subcontractor named in the com-
11 plaint the opportunities specified in subpara-
12 graph (B), the Secretary of Labor shall conduct
13 an investigation to determine whether there is
14 reasonable cause to believe that a complaint
15 submitted under this subsection has merit.

16 “(B) OPPORTUNITY FOR RESPONSE.—Be-
17 fore the date specified in subparagraph (A), the
18 Secretary of Labor shall afford the air carrier,
19 contractor, or subcontractor named in the com-
20 plaint an opportunity to—

21 “(i) submit to the Secretary of Labor
22 a written response to the complaint; and

23 “(ii) meet with a representative of the
24 Secretary of Labor to present statements
25 from witnesses.

1 “(C) NOTIFICATION.—Upon completion of
2 an investigation under subparagraph (A), the
3 Secretary of Labor shall notify the complainant
4 and the air carrier, contractor, or subcontractor
5 alleged to have committed a violation of sub-
6 section (a) of the findings of the investigation.

7 “(D) ORDERS.—If, on the basis of the in-
8 vestigation conducted under this paragraph, the
9 Secretary of Labor concludes that there is a
10 reasonable cause to believe that a violation of
11 subsection (a) has occurred, the Secretary
12 shall—

13 “(i) issue a preliminary order provid-
14 ing the relief prescribed by paragraph
15 (3)(B); and

16 “(ii) provide a copy of the order to the
17 parties specified in subparagraph (C).

18 “(E) OBJECTIONS.—Not later than 30
19 days after receiving a notification under sub-
20 paragraph (C), the air carrier, contractor, or
21 subcontractor alleged to have committed a vio-
22 lation in a complaint filed under this subsection
23 or the complainant may file an objection to the
24 findings of an investigation conducted under
25 this paragraph or a preliminary order issued

1 under this paragraph and request a hearing on
 2 the record. The filing of an objection under this
 3 subparagraph shall not operate to stay any re-
 4 instatement remedy contained in a preliminary
 5 order issued under this paragraph.

6 “(F) HEARINGS.—A hearing requested
 7 under this paragraph shall be conducted expedi-
 8 tiously.

9 “(G) FINAL ORDER.—If no hearing is re-
 10 quested by the date specified in subparagraph
 11 (E), a preliminary order shall be considered to
 12 be a final order that is not subject to judicial
 13 review.

14 “(3) FINAL ORDER.—

15 “(A) DEADLINE FOR ISSUANCE; SETTLE-
 16 MENT AGREEMENTS.—

17 “(i) IN GENERAL.—Not later than
 18 120 days after conclusion of a hearing
 19 under paragraph (2), the Secretary of
 20 Labor shall issue a final order that—

21 “(I) provides relief in accordance
 22 with this paragraph; or

23 “(II) denies the complaint.

24 “(ii) SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT.—At
 25 any time before issuance of a final order

1 under this paragraph, a proceeding under
2 this subsection may be terminated on the
3 basis of a settlement agreement entered
4 into by the Secretary of Labor, the com-
5 plainant, and the air carrier, contractor, or
6 subcontractor alleged to have committed
7 the violation.

8 “(B) REMEDY.—If, in response to a com-
9 plaint filed under paragraph (1), the Secretary
10 of Labor determines that a violation of sub-
11 section (a) has occurred, the Secretary of Labor
12 shall order the air carrier, contractor, or sub-
13 contractor that the Secretary of Labor deter-
14 mines to have committed the violation to—

15 “(i) take action to abate the violation;

16 “(ii) reinstate the complainant to the
17 former position of the complainant and en-
18 sure the payment of compensation (includ-
19 ing back pay) and the restoration of terms,
20 conditions, and privileges associated with
21 the employment; and

22 “(iii) provide compensatory damages
23 to the complainant.

“(C) COSTS OF COMPLAINT.—If the Secretary of Labor issues a final order that provides for relief in accordance with this paragraph, the Secretary of Labor, at the request of the complainant, shall assess against the air carrier, contractor, or subcontractor named in the order an amount equal to the aggregate amount of all costs and expenses (including attorney and expert witness fees) reasonably incurred by the complainant (as determined by the Secretary of Labor) for, or in connection with, the bringing of the complaint that resulted in the issuance of the order.

“(D) FRIVOLOUS COMPLAINTS.—If the Secretary of Labor finds that a complaint brought under paragraph (1) is frivolous or was brought in bad faith, the Secretary of Labor may award to the prevailing employer a reasonable attorney fee in an amount not to exceed \$5,000.

“(4) REVIEW.—

“(A) APPEAL TO COURT OF APPEALS.—

“(i) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 60 days after a final order is issued under paragraph (3), a person adversely affected

1 or aggrieved by that order may obtain re-
 2 view of the order in the United States
 3 court of appeals for the circuit in which
 4 the violation allegedly occurred or the cir-
 5 cuit in which the complainant resided on
 6 the date of that violation.

7 “(ii) REQUIREMENTS FOR JUDICIAL
 8 REVIEW.—A review conducted under this
 9 paragraph shall be conducted in accord-
 10 ance with chapter 7 of title 5. The com-
 11 mencement of proceedings under this sub-
 12 paragraph shall not, unless ordered by the
 13 court, operate as a stay of the order that
 14 is the subject of the review.

15 “(B) LIMITATION ON COLLATERAL AT-
 16 TACK.—An order referred to in subparagraph
 17 (A) shall not be subject to judicial review in any
 18 criminal or other civil proceeding.

19 “(5) ENFORCEMENT OF ORDER BY SECRETARY
 20 OF LABOR.—

21 “(A) IN GENERAL.—If an air carrier, con-
 22 tractor, or subcontractor named in an order is-
 23 sued under paragraph (3) fails to comply with
 24 the order, the Secretary of Labor may file a
 25 civil action in the United States district court

1 for the district in which the violation occurred
2 to enforce that order.

3 “(B) RELIEF.—In any action brought
4 under this paragraph, the district court shall
5 have jurisdiction to grant any appropriate form
6 of relief, including injunctive relief and compen-
7 satory damages.

8 “(6) ENFORCEMENT OF ORDER BY PARTIES.—

9 “(A) COMMENCEMENT OF ACTION.—A per-
10 son on whose behalf an order is issued under
11 paragraph (3) may commence a civil action
12 against the air carrier, contractor, or sub-
13 contractor named in the order to require com-
14 pliance with the order. The appropriate United
15 States district court shall have jurisdiction,
16 without regard to the amount in controversy or
17 the citizenship of the parties, to enforce the
18 order.

19 “(B) ATTORNEY FEES.—In issuing any
20 final order under this paragraph, the court may
21 award costs of litigation (including reasonable
22 attorney and expert witness fees) to any party
23 if the court determines that the awarding of
24 those costs is appropriate.

1 “(c) MANDAMUS.—Any nondiscretionary duty im-
 2 posed by this section shall be enforceable in a mandamus
 3 proceeding brought under section 1361 of title 28.

4 “(d) NONAPPLICABILITY TO DELIBERATE VIOLA-
 5 TIONS.—Subsection (a) shall not apply with respect to an
 6 employee of an air carrier, or contractor or subcontractor
 7 of an air carrier who, acting without direction from the
 8 air carrier (or an agent, contractor, or subcontractor of
 9 the air carrier), deliberately causes a violation of any re-
 10 quirement relating to air carrier safety under this subtitle
 11 or any other law of the United States.”.

12 (b) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—The chapter analy-
 13 sis for chapter 421 of title 49, United States Code, is
 14 amended by adding at the end the following:

“SUBCHAPTER III—WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION PROGRAM
 “42121. Protection of employees providing air safety information.”.

15 **SEC. 3. CIVIL PENALTY.**

16 Section 46301(a)(1)(A) of title 49, United States
 17 Code, is amended by striking “subchapter II of chapter
 18 421” and inserting “subchapter II or III of chapter 421”.

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