

THE LAW OFFICES OF
JEREMY D. WEINSTEIN
A PROFESSIONAL CORPORATION

August 19, 2013

Mr. Jeffery Smisek
President
United Airlines
233 South Wacker Drive
Chicago, Illinois 60606

Re: UA3864 8/16; UA3867 8:45am 8/18; Reservation C5T41B

Dear Mr. Smisek:

I am writing to ask you (a) to apologize to us and your other passengers for their experiences relating to the above-referenced two flights that were cancelled due to "mechanical problems," and (b) for a partial cash refund as detailed below. I am copying the Administrator and the Commissioners because they need to know the serious passenger safety concerns presented by what we encountered and witnessed. I am copying Mr. Kelly of Southwest Airlines to thank him for rescuing us from you with his fine airline.

This weekend we saw United Airlines flight and ground operations personnel in different locations be consistently rude and nasty to passengers when United failed those passengers. Although we saw some personnel behave professionally under stress, this was the exception. This presents a very serious concern with respect to passenger safety. Your employees are not going to prioritize, or even think of, passenger safety if they hate the passengers.

Here is what we went through. Other passengers on these flights had similar experiences to varying degrees.

To use soon-to-expire United vouchers that my wife and I had received last year for agreeing to be bounced from an oversold flight, we purchased, by paying several hundred further dollars, a United round-trip flight from San Francisco to Rapid City, changing in Denver. Our goal was to see Mt. Rushmore. I took Friday off from work to take a long weekend. We were excited and looking forward to our trip.

Our flight from San Francisco to Denver on Friday was nearly an hour late, and we were anxious that we were running late for our UA3864 2:10 flight to Rapid City. But when we landed, my wife saw she had an email saying our Rapid City flight was cancelled and that we were booked on the next morning's flight. That was it. Implicit in that brief message was - find your own hotel in Denver, you've lost a day of your long weekend vacation, and you may have taken time off from work for nothing, because you can't rely on our planes.

We went to passenger service. We were offered a flight on Delta that would arrive in Rapid City around midnight. It wasn't until the second time I asked to speak to a supervisor that one showed up. Then we were offered a voucher for an airport hotel room for the night. This,

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along with some inkling of some empathy or apology, should have been the first thing out of the agent's mouth, but it was not. The line woman we dealt with was not nearly as bad as the "supervisor" and the other customer service agents, who behaved shockingly. The other agents laughed at us and the supervisor smirked throughout our dialogue with her, as her hand rested on the walkie-talkie on her hip. At one point I had to ask her to repeat herself because one of the other agents was saying so loudly to another couple of passengers "thank you for being so cooperative," in obviously pointed apposition to how upset the nasty, unhelpful supervisor had made me and my wife. This other couple chose to rent a car and drive the rest of the way, and agreed to go on-line themselves to get a ticket refund, and so needed no further help from the "customer service" agents, for which your employees expressed their appreciation so loudly I could not hear above them.

When my wife pointed out we had to pay for our hotel near Mt. Rushmore, at which we could not stay because we were now stuck in Denver, the supervisor snottily said, "it's a wash," apparently because United was paying for a hotel in the city where it stranded us, while we paid for the hotel in the place we had paid United to take us to. It is not a wash. We got plenty of "what more do you expect us to do?"s from your employees, but not a single "we understand that you and your wife are upset and we will try to help." In fact, I didn't hear them say anything like the latter to any other passenger who came up for service while we were there, although only about three to five passengers or couples came up for service in all that time. These "customer service" people hate your passengers.

We stayed at the airport Marriott Friday night. We took cabs into and back from Denver and went to the Denver Art Museum and out to dinner. United did get us to Rapid City before lunch time Saturday. We did not get to do all the activities we had planned for our expensive trip, but we did see Mt. Rushmore, which we very much enjoyed. Sunday morning we went to Rapid City for the 8:45 flight to Denver.

We were greeted after boarding the plane by a blonde stewardess yelling at my wife for not having her purse in her tote bag. I've never seen a stewardess be so verbally abusive to any passenger on any flight on any airline for such an "infraction." We are nice people and not obnoxious. We did nothing to deserve the abuse. We had not even spoken to or noticed her before she started yelling at my wife. This is a flight operations person showing seething hatred and contempt for your passengers.

After all the passengers boarded, the pilot got on the intercom and said that the plane would be delayed because although there was a problem that was minor, the nearest mechanic was an hour away and it would take him that long to get there. A one hour delay out of Rapid City meant that almost all the passengers, including us, would miss their connecting flights. A single gate agent worked with passengers two at a time over the next hour. I don't know that she was able to help more than six passengers during that hour. From our seat, we booked a flight on Southwest Airlines to San Francisco through Los Angeles. I also called United, which put us on an even later 5:15 flight to San Francisco.

Then, after that hour, with perhaps half a dozen of the passengers helped on rebookings, our 8:45 flight was cancelled. There was no announcement; we just noticed that all the passengers were leaving and figured it out. On the way out of the plane I asked if the flight was cancelled, was told it was and I overheard a man in a United uniform say, sincerely, "maybe I should have announced it more loudly."

After our 8:45 Rapid City-Denver flight was cancelled, I used the United 800 number and got on the 11:22 Rapid City flight to Denver. The passengers in the small terminal were gradually migrating from the line before the gate agent for the 8:45 gate directly across to the 11:22 gate, but were generally quiet, even if understandably unhappy. The gate agent for the 11:22 flight was quite different- she was beside herself and yelling at the passengers. A passenger showed up early for his later flight and asked if there were seats available on the 11:22 flight out of Rapid City. There was no way for him to know that the 11:22 flight was full with passengers bounced from the earlier flight. Instead of explaining this, which would have taken less time than the approach she did take, she loudly bit his head off, humiliating him in front of all the other passengers.

The gate agent for the 11:22 flight yelled, and I mean yelled, at passengers repeatedly, "you need to sit down and be patient." A professional airline would have a gate agent in a situation where all passengers have been bounced due to that airline's failure to maintain its airplanes say words to the effect of "we will take care of you, don't worry, we are here and on top of this." Many passengers became visibly upset by her verbal barrage. This is not her fault, but your fault. You did not provide her the support she thinks she needed to do her job.

There was only one United Airlines person on either the 8:45 or 11:22 flight who was actively nice to us or any other passenger that we saw. That was a young brunette stewardess on the 8:45 flight, who expressed genuine sympathy to passengers. Presumably she has not been with United Airlines long enough to absorb your culture of contempt for passengers.

When we got on the 11:22 flight out of Rapid City, a nasty stewardess was very unpleasant to most of the passengers, without any provocation that I could see. Many of these passengers had just been bounced from their 8:45 flight and were going to miss their connections. Their days were all ruined. It would have been nice if you were able to field personnel willing to treat these passengers courteously. The stewardess, just like your nasty gate agent, did not have her day ruined. The stewardess and the gate agent were doing the same job that they were being paid for and were going to be home at the same time they started their day thinking they would be home. Not so the passengers.

Your nasty stewardess on the 11:22 flight then made most of the passengers put their bags in the hold, even though they fit overhead, and had in fact been stowed overhead on their flights to Rapid City, and this ended up delaying the flight while the ground crew wrestled the bags into the hold. This made already anxious passengers even more anxious. When we landed in Denver, more passengers waiting for bags than I have ever seen on a puddle jumper flight waited on the tarmac in the 92 degree heat for their bags. This also took longer than I have ever seen take on a puddle jumper flight. Both the delays at take off and landing of passengers who

needed to rush to try to make connections would have been avoided absent the sadistic satisfaction demanded of the 11:22 am passengers by this stewardess. This is not a stewardess who likes your passengers. Rather, this is another stewardess who hates your passengers.

Air crew that hates the passengers, and ground crew that is unable to function under the pressure of your planes' mechanical failures, presents a high risk to passenger safety.

When we sought to reschedule for Denver to San Francisco, the agent at the 800 number told us we could get on the 5:15 flight, but that there were no first class seats available. We booked the SF-Denver legs first class as a special treat for ourselves, and even paid extra in order to complete the ticket with the vouchers. Booking our flight in the first place took me more than a full hour with a series of reservation agents, because United at first was unwilling to honor both our vouchers. For this change from our booked 11:09 flight to a more than six hours later 5:15 flight, after putting me on hold for nearly ten minutes, the 800 agent was unable to issue me a refund for the difference between coach and first class, or even tell me what that refund would be, and told me to go online to get the refund.

To not deliver what you promise and instead tell passengers "go online and get the refund yourself" is unacceptable. You're the one that did not deliver. You should be giving me the refund, not making me spend further time and work to get it. I did not like being on hold ten minutes to then be told that I had to go online and get the refund, and I don't understand how it could take you more than ten minutes to issue me the refund in the first place. Therefore, I am asking you here to issue me a refund, in cash and not by voucher, for the difference between the first class ticket I bought and the coach ticket that you were willing to deliver.

There are some employees we encountered this weekend who were fine. Our issue is not with the people who answer your 800 number. It is with your people on the ground in the airports and on the planes. Other than being late, we have no complaint about personnel on our SF-Denver flight, or on our Denver-Rapid City flight. They were not under the apparently unbearable stress of unhappy passengers. The ground agent for the 8:45 flight was fine.

The issues we encountered this weekend were not due to weather. They were due to you- your inability to maintain your planes, your inability to hire sufficient ground crew, your inability to hire sufficient personnel to help customers when your underserviced equipment inevitably fails. It is not your passengers' job to make life easier for your employees when your airline fails to perform because you do not properly maintain your planes. It's your job, and you should have sufficient personnel to do it. I do not understand why you want your airline represented by a customer service supervisor who smirks and is nasty to customers made unhappy by United's own failures.

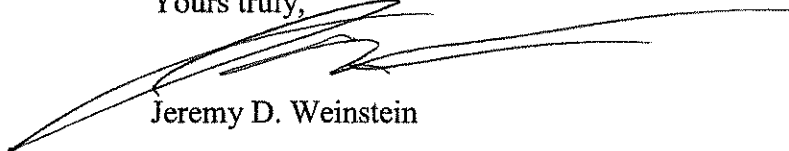
The Hertz Rent-A-Car lady in Rapid City apologized to us for the inconvenience we had suffered at your hands, showing more empathy for us for United's failures than did all United Airlines personnel combined.

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Although we enjoyed Mt. Rushmore, we had three mornings of having to wake up at the crack of dawn in order to catch flights, the stress of canceled and delayed flights, and the stress of wondering if United was going to perform in light of two cancellations and unreliable service from United. We paid you for a first class, enjoyable vacation. You did not deliver it.

Fortunately, we have Southwest Airlines available to us. That is how we got back to San Francisco from Denver.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeremy D. Weinstein', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jeremy D. Weinstein

cc: Mr. Michael P. Huerta, Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20591
Commissioner Edith Ramirez
Commissioner Julie Brill
Commissioner Maureen K. Ohlhausen
Commissioner Joshua D. Wright
Federal Trade Commission
600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20580
Mr. Gary Kelly, CEO Southwest Airlines
Southwest Airlines
P.O. Box 36647-1CR
Dallas, Texas 75235
Mrs. Debby Weinstein