

## Myths and Facts Regarding the Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA)

**Myth:** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) applies to commercial air travel in the United States.

**Fact:** No, the ADA does not apply to commercial air travel. The Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA) prohibits disability-based discrimination in air travel. Prior to the ACAA, passengers with disabilities often encountered air travel policies that varied from carrier to carrier, and even among flights on the same airline. Carriers often required people with disabilities to travel with companions, and frequently did not provide assistance in a timely manner. As a result of the ACAA, air travel for passengers with disabilities improved.



**Paralyzed Veterans  
of America**

**Myth:** Lavatories on all commercially flown airplanes in the United States must be accessible.

**Fact:** Under the Air Carrier Access Act, at least one lavatory on each twin-aisle airplane must be accessible to a passenger using an on-board wheelchair. Lavatories on single-aisle airplanes, which represent the vast majority of commercial air traffic within the United States, do not have to be accessible for passengers with disabilities. The Department of Transportation is currently considering whether or not lavatories on new single-aisle aircraft of a certain size must be accessible.

**Myth:** Passengers with disabilities traveling by air within the United States on domestic carriers must be allowed to use snakes as service animals.

**Fact:** No, under the Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA) airlines are not required to provide access for snakes, other reptiles, ferrets, rodents, spiders and other "unusual service animals." However, the species of animals allowed is broader than those allowed under the Department of Justice's Americans with Disability Act regulations. For example, the ACAA provides access for species beyond dogs and miniature horses, such as cats. In addition, passengers may use emotional support animals.

**Myth:** The Air Carrier Access Act requires airlines to accommodate passengers' disability-related seating accommodation needs even if it means providing a first class seat to a passenger with a coach ticket.

**Fact:** Airlines are not required "to provide a seat in a class of service other than the one the passenger has purchased in order to provide an accommodation." Thus, if a passenger needs a bulkhead seat that is in premium economy, then the passenger must buy a premium economy ticket even if the request for a bulkhead seat is an accommodation. Within a passenger's class of service, however, the airline must accommodate a disability-related seating selection need without requiring payment of any additional fees (for example, selecting an aisle seat).

**Myth:** All wheelchairs must be gate checked under the requirements of the Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA).

**Fact:** The ACAA allows passengers who use manual, folding wheelchairs the opportunity to have their chairs stowed in a compartment in the aircraft cabin or strapped to a row of airlines seats. Airlines choosing to stow wheelchairs using seat strapping must accommodate two chairs unless doing so would displace passengers. In that case, the second chair may be checked.

For more information on the Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA), please visit [www.pva.org/ACAA](http://www.pva.org/ACAA).