

February 23, 2006

US Airways System Baggage Services  
Customer Service  
P.O. Box 12346 PIT-1110  
Pittsburgh International Airport  
Pittsburgh, PA 15231-0346

Via US Postal mail and Fax to 412-747-5447

Regarding: Baggage related complaint and request for monetary compensation

To Whom It May Concern:

#### **Overview**

I am requesting reimbursement in the amount of \$155.13 for the purchase of business attire and essentials, required for purchase by me, due to a US Airway's flight attendant failure to properly code the hand-written luggage tag affixed to a properly sized piece of carry-on luggage which was forced to be checked due to presumed "lack of space."

#### **Details**

On Tuesday, February 21, 2006, I boarded flight 468 from the Raleigh-Durham airport en route to Charlotte with connecting flight 2329 to Huntsville, Alabama. The purpose of this trip was for business, for 3Dsolve Inc., and included a return flight the following day; less than 24 hours after arrival. For flight 468, I was in Zone 6, to be seated in Seat 5E. I was carrying with me my small, airplane-approved, carry-on roller bag and my laptop case. A copy of my boarding passes for each flight is included.

As I boarded the plane, a female flight attendant told the remaining four passengers (of which I was one) that there was no room on the plane for further overhead-stored, carry-on luggage. If our luggage could not fit beneath our seats, it would have to be checked. These passengers, therefore, were forced to turn over their luggage to these flight attendants with the understanding that the luggage would be checked through to our final destinations. All had small airplane-approved carry-on roller bags, including myself – meeting the description and requirements set forth on the US Airways website.

[http://www.usairways.com/customers/travel\\_policies/baggage/index.htm#Checked%20Baggage%20Allowance](http://www.usairways.com/customers/travel_policies/baggage/index.htm#Checked%20Baggage%20Allowance)

#### **Free Baggage Allowance - Carry on**

Carry-on baggage is limited to one piece per customer, plus a personal item such as a purse, briefcase, laptop, small backpack, camera bags, small daypacks, infant bags, diaper bag or camera case. The personal item, which is to be placed under the seat in front of you, cannot exceed total overall dimensions of 36 inches. The other item of baggage may be placed in the overhead compartment and cannot exceed the following maximum dimensions:

- Valet Closet--45L x 23 1/2W x 4H
- Overhead Stowage--24L x 16W x 10H
- Underseat Stowage--21L x 16W x 8H
- Carry-on baggage dimensions: US Airways' maximum linear dimensions are 51"
- Both items cannot exceed a total combined weight of 40 pounds. Carry-on baggage allowance may be restricted due to lack of space.

Some airports may be more restrictive due to local operational requirements.

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Luggage was taken from the person in front of me with a hand written note, *on a napkin*, laid on top of their luggage. I did not expect to check nor want to check my luggage. As my luggage was being taken the following conversation ensued.

Flight Attendant: "There is no more room for carry-on luggage. We'll need to check your bags. Is Charlotte your final destination?"

Me: "No, I'm flying to Huntsville, Alabama."

Flight Attendant to other female flight attendant: "What is the code for Huntsville, HTS?"

2<sup>nd</sup> flight attendant: "No, I don't know, just write Huntsville."

Me: "Can I pick it up in Charlotte?"

Flight Attendant: "No, it'll be checked all the way through Huntsville."

Person behind me: "Can we gate check it?"

Flight Attendant: "No, when it's checked on these planes, it must be checked as all other baggage is checked and delivered at the final destination."

At this point, the first flight attendant wrote my seat number and the word 'Huntsville' on a napkin and laid it on my suitcase, just under the carrying handle. She confirmed that she would bring a baggage tag/receipt to me, to my seat, which she did. A copy of my hand-written *Passenger Receipt* and the *Limited Release Bag Tag* which was included on my baggage is included. Neither my name, signature, final destination nor connecting flight information is listed on either tag.

Upon my arrival in Huntsville (at approximately 6:15pm CST), I proceeded to baggage claim, where I found my luggage had not been delivered. I asked the male US Airways baggage handler in the baggage claim area if all luggage had been removed from the plane, to which he responded yes. I then asked how I could check on mine and he pointed me to the terminal ticket counter.

I proceeded to the US Airways ticket counter, along with my two traveling companions, to request information. As we walked to the counter, one of my traveling companions noted that there were two overhead bins and several empty seats in which my baggage could have fit toward the back of the airplane. In addition, he (as did I) questioned why four pieces could not be 1) stowed in a closet or 2) gate checked.

Nicoletta Antonacci represented US Airways at the ticket counter and upon reviewing the hand-written baggage claim tag, immediately made a phone call. When completed, the following conversation ensued.

Nicoletta: "I have found your bag. It is in Huntington. HTS is the code for Huntington. Unfortunately, the last US Airways flight out of Huntington, to Huntsville, has already departed. The earliest flight out tomorrow [February 22, 2006] is 9:00 a.m. We can deliver it to your hotel if you'd like."

Me: "I have an 8:00 am meeting, I cannot go overnight without my bag as it contains all my business attire. I cannot go to my meeting in jeans and tennis shoes." I then retold the story written above to Nicoletta.

Nicoletta: "Let me call and see if Delta can fly it in."

She called Delta, but Delta's last flight for the night had also already departed.

Me: "Why did my bag go to Huntington?"

Nicoletta: "The code for Huntington is HTS. The code for Huntsville is HSV. As soon as I saw HTS on your tag, I knew where it was."

Me: "Where is Huntington?"

Nicoletta: "West Virginia"

Me: "What is US Airways going to do then? I was forced to check a bag I did not want to check and it's not here. I have no clothes for my 8:00 am meeting and you cannot get it here until after I am done and ready to fly home. What am I supposed to do?"

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Nicoletta then called her supervisor, Alex Jewell, who was located in another area and not a face-to-face party to any of this conversation.

Nicoletta: "My supervisor says that US Airways cannot compensate you for the luggage unless it cannot be returned for a minimum of 24 hours."

Me: "But my flight out is at 3pm tomorrow and my meeting is at 8:00am."

Nicoletta: "I know it used to be that we could compensate for like up to \$100 or something, but with the America West merger, many of those policies changed. I asked my supervisor and he cannot do anything. Only the station manager can override the policies."

Me: "I understand the 24 hour-rule and believe it is a reasonable one, except my stay is not much longer than 24 hours. You cannot get it to me before my 8:00 am meeting which means you cannot get it to me in Huntsville at all as I will be on the road, returning to this airport for my 3:00 pm departure. I'm not going to be able to get my bag at all here."

Nicoletta: "I can have your bag shipped back to Raleigh if you'd like."

Me: "So, your flight attendant forces me to check a bag I did not want check because they couldn't find room for just a few more bags in all the overhead bins and I'm left with no clothing for a meeting in the morning because you cannot get my bag to me today."

Nicoletta: "I'm really sorry. There is just nothing else I can do."

Me: "Who is your station manager?"

Nicoletta: "Diane Bergren."

Me: "Where is she?"

Nicoletta: "She has already left for the day."

Me: "Can you get her on the phone to authorize a policy override?"

Nicoletta: "No. In her absence, my supervisor can make those decisions and he says he cannot authorize any further assistance."

Me: "But this is really important! I have no clothes! Can't you get her on the phone or something? I don't have 24 hours to wait to retrieve my bags. If the flight attendant had just written the right code... or the word like she was told to do, this wouldn't be a problem. But, again, it's your fault and I am paying the price. Why can't you get the station manager's assistance on this? I understand the 24-hour delivery period, for those on trips longer than 24 hours! But I'm leaving at 3:00 pm tomorrow which is not even 24 hours from now."

Nicoletta: "Unfortunately, this happens too often to warrant getting her involved when she has left for the day. She will be in tomorrow if you'd like to speak with her."

Me: "So I'm going to have to go out and buy clothes, when it's nearing 7:00 pm for an 8:00 am meeting because one person, in your company, screwed up and you can't do anything about it?"

Nicoletta: "I'm really sorry. There is just nothing else I can do."

At that point, I departed the ticket counter. In my mind, there was no point in arguing further as it was completely obvious, to me, that US Airways' policy was in their best interest and not in the interest of the passenger... despite the fact that the fault lied completely with US Airways staff.

On Wednesday, February 23, 2006, I returned to the US Airways ticket counter at Huntsville International Airport at approximately 12:15 pm. It was during this meeting that I spoke with Diane Bergren, the US Airways station manager for the Huntsville International Airport location. I relayed all the information above to Diane who stated and accepted responsibility on the part of US Airways.

However, Diane indicated that at a local level, she could only authorize a check for \$25 per every 24-hour period in which I did not have my belongings. Therefore, given it had been lost the previous day, she could write a check in the amount of \$25 to me. A copy of that check is included. Diane also provided me with a *Property Irregularity Receipt* and *Customer Relations Referral to System Baggage Services* address and phone number. Copies of both documents are included.

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Diane also indicated that further reimbursement would have to be completed at a corporate level and to do so, I should write/call the US System Baggage Services department, which is consistent with the information provided on the US Airways website, customer commitment section.

According to the US Airways website... at  
[http://www.usairways.com/customers/customer\\_commitment/#Commitment%203](http://www.usairways.com/customers/customer_commitment/#Commitment%203)

US Airways commits:

- To transport your checked baggage and to return it promptly upon arrival at your destination.
- To return delayed, checked baggage before midnight, or when this is not possible, to return it the next day, unless otherwise requested.
- To make around-the-clock deliveries to hotels, receptions desks, etc., provided someone is available to receive your baggage.
- To attempt to contact any customer by telephone whose unclaimed, checked bag contains a name and address or telephone number.
- To reimburse you for reasonable purchases directly related to the purpose of your trip when you are away from home if your checked baggage is not available on your arrival. Reimbursement will be made upon presentation of proper receipts. Further information regarding this policy may be obtained from any authorized US Airways agent or on the US Airways web site **usairways.com** (please see [Appendix II](#)).

According to Appendix II, [http://www.usairways.com/customers/customer\\_commitment/appendix2.htm](http://www.usairways.com/customers/customer_commitment/appendix2.htm)

- You will leave the airport with information that will include your baggage report number. This indicates that your report has been entered into our computer system and a systemwide tracing has begun. Also included with the baggage report information is our toll-free [baggage service](#) number for you to call in the event you have questions.
- Upon locating the delayed baggage, a representative of US Airways will contact you to arrange the return of your bag. Baggage deliveries will be made before midnight or, when this is not possible, the next business day, unless otherwise requested.
- US Airways will authorize reimbursement of reasonable purchases for necessities directly related to the purpose of your trip when you are away from home.
- Upon presentation of receipts to the local US Airways representative, you will be reimbursed up to \$25 for the second day and \$25 for each day thereafter to a maximum of \$75. Under extenuating circumstances, US Airways will work with you to meet your needs. You may also mail receipts to:

With regard to the commitment and Appendix II, I will add that

- There was no round-the-clock delivery option offered to me. I was told my luggage would be on the first US Airways flight into Huntsville the morning of February 22, 2006, which departed Huntington at 9:00 am on February 22, 2006 and, which was, for obvious reasons, unacceptable.
- When I left Huntsville International Airport the evening of February 21, 2006, I was not given a baggage report number. As a matter of fact, no claim had been made with regard to my baggage until I returned to Huntsville International Airport on February 22, 2006 as can be noted on the *Property Irregularity Receipt* as Date/Time/Agent: 22Feb/12:39/0NB

- The local US Airways representative did reimburse me \$25 as noted in the last bullet point of Appendix II above. However, I believe this is an *extenuating circumstance* and 1) should have been addressed more quickly the evening of February 21, 2006 and 2) requires full reimbursement given the timeframe for my business trip, the obvious and complete fault of the US Airways flight attendant and the lack of an offer to deliver my bag to me prior to my 8:00 am meeting.

My piece of luggage was a small, black, rolling suitcase with no zip-out compartments opened. In it, I carried the following items:

- Toiletries
- Suit jacket (one)
- Black slacks (one)
- Black shoes (one pair)
- Blouse (one)
- Sleepwear
- Undergarments & socks

Due to the US Airways flight attendant's failure to properly code my *Passenger Receipt*, I was forced to purchase similar attire in order to conduct the business transactions for which I had traveled to Huntsville. The evening of February 21, 2006, all of the following items were purchased in preparation for my business meeting February 22, 2006, and for the noted amount. Copies of receipts for all purchased items are included.

Item	Cost
Blouse	\$29.99
Black pants	\$39.99
Black shoes	\$29.50
Sleepwear	\$19.00
Undergarments	\$19.00
Toiletries	\$29.31
Tax (8%)	\$13.34
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$180.13</b>

The total out-of-pocket cost for attire that I neither needed, nor wanted to purchase is **\$155.13**, reflecting the \$25 check already provided by the Huntsville US Airways Station Manager.

A copy of this letter has been provided to all the following parties in addition to the two addressees.

Diane Bergen  
US Airways Station Manager  
c/o Huntsville International Airport  
Box 20008  
1000 Glenn Hearn Blvd  
Huntsville, AL 35824

3Dsolve Inc.  
1140 Kildaire Farm Rd.  
Suite 200  
Cary, NC 27511

US Airways  
Flight Attendant Management  
c/o Raleigh/Durham International Airport  
P.O. Box 80001  
RDU Airport, NC 27623

US Airways Office of Customer Relations  
P.O. Box 1501  
Winston Salem, NC 27102-1501

Per the US Airways website at [http://www.usairways.com/customers/customer\\_commitment/#Commitment%2012](http://www.usairways.com/customers/customer_commitment/#Commitment%2012)  
I will expect an appropriate and timely response to this complaint and request for reimbursement within 30 days.

If any further information is needed or required, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Aimée Bickers  
Sr. Project Manager

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