



American Society of Travel Agents
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February 18, 2014

The Honorable Janéa Holmquist Newbry
Chair, Senate Commerce & Labor Committee
106B Irv Newhouse Building
Olympia, WA 98504-0413

Dear Chair Holmquist Newbry:

I write today on behalf of the American Society of Travel Agents (ASTA) and the more than 1,800 people who work at travel agencies in the State of Washington to express our concerns about House Bill (HB) 2590, which would add new requirements to the state's "seller of travel" laws.

ASTA represents travel agents of all shapes and sizes, from the smallest home-based agent to traditional "brick and mortar" agencies to the large travel management companies such as American Express Travel to the prominent online companies like Expedia and Priceline. ASTA's sister association, The National Association of Career Travel Agents (NACTA), represents a professional community of independent and home-based agents ready to assist the traveling public. The heads of the Pacific Northwest chapters of both ASTA and NACTA (Robert Roach and Dan Smith, respectively) will be at the committee's hearing tomorrow.

To the issue at hand. Under current Washington law, a trust bank account must be established for all moneys received from customers as payment for retail travel services when these funds are held for more than five business days. The trust account provision does not apply for most credit card transactions or airline transactions processed through the Airlines Reporting Corporation (ARC). While the trust account provision does apply to cash/check funds that travel agents receive from their customers for some transactions (e.g. cruises, tours), the five-day provision typically provides travel agents with enough time to pass on the funds to a supplier without the need for a trust account.

HB 2590 would strike this five-day grace period. We feel strongly that this legislation would impose real burdens on agencies, particularly those whose customers prefer to pay by cash or check.

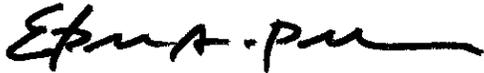
As an association of travel professionals, we have no objection to efforts to weed out unscrupulous individuals masquerading as bona fide travel agents.

However, it is not clear to us that HB 2590 would truly address the problem it seeks to solve. But it will surely add another layer of regulation on legitimate and heavily-regulated Washington travel agents.

Washington's travel agency industry contributes 1,813 full-time jobs and \$112 million in direct economic impact to the state. These are predominantly small businesses, with 73 percent of them employing fewer than 5 people. On behalf of these hard-working women and men, we urge you to oppose HB 2590.

Thank you for considering our views on this important issue. If you or your staff have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (703) 739-6842 or epeck@asta.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eben A. Peck". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

EBEN A. PECK
Vice President, Government Affairs

CC: Honorable Members, Senate Commerce & Labor Committee