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## **CONSUMER COALITION APPLAUDS SOUTHWEST AIRLINES' COMMITMENT TO AIRFARE TRANSPARENCY**

***Air Travel Fairness urges airline to fully embrace transparency by  
allowing its fares and schedules to be visible at places consumers choose***

WASHINGTON – DECEMBER 20, 2017 – The Air Travel Fairness Coalition, one of the largest traveler advocacy organizations in the U.S., applauds Southwest Airlines' ongoing efforts to increase airfare transparency.

According to [Southwest's website](#), the airline's multi-million dollar "transparency" advertising campaign describes a "philosophy in which customers are treated honestly and fairly...no unexpected bag fees, change fees, or hidden fees." The Southwest advertising campaign also says the airline is "...[all about being open and honest with customers](#)," and "Low fares. Nothing to hide." In fact, when the airline introduced the campaign, the company's Chief Marketing Officer told the [Dallas Morning News](#), "This is what customers want," for customers to be treated "honestly and fairly."

The Air Travel Fairness Coalition urged Southwest, [the largest airline in the U.S.](#), to complete and extend its advertised commitment to airfare transparency to all of the places consumers rely on to compare airfares and schedules. Despite the "nothing to hide" claim in Southwest's advertising, no major airline hides their fares and schedules from convenient one-stop comparison travel websites like Southwest.

"We welcome Southwest's efforts to make the public more aware of hidden fees and charges," said Kurt Ebenhoch, executive director of the Air Travel Fairness Coalition. "But that's just one part of transparency. We urge Southwest to be open and honest by making their fares and schedules visible to the public at the places consumers choose to obtain travel information."

In survey after survey, including one conducted by the [airline industry itself](#), travelers have said they want to be able to quickly and easily compare **all** the airlines flying to their destination, and the cost of flying on each of them. Not allowing travelers to compare fares and schedules at the travel resource of *their* choice forces them to visit multiple places. It also results in winners and losers being chosen by the largest U.S. airlines and big business, instead of by consumers and market forces, as providers competing on service and quality to win customers' business.

“Transparency around bag fees, change fees or other hidden fees is an important step,” said Ebenhoch. “But treating customers honestly and fairly means making it easier and simpler for consumers to compare all airfares and flight schedules, including Southwest’s.”

Today, the four largest U.S. airlines maintain an oligopoly over domestic air travel, with control over more than 80% of the flights in the U.S. Earlier this year, [the CEO of JetBlue, Robin Hayes, said](#) the major airlines - American, Delta, Southwest and United - hold a “startling concentration of power” and those same carriers are “trying to use their muscle and deep pockets to limit competition.”

A [study](#) by Fiona Scott Morton of the Yale School of Management, and R. Craig Romaine and Spencer Graf of consulting firm Charles River Associates, showed what happens when airlines block consumers from being able to compare fares and flights. “Restrictions by airlines of broad access to airline information—prices and schedules—substantially reduce consumer welfare. This study estimates the potential reduction in net consumer welfare of limiting airline price and schedule information to only airline websites could exceed \$6 billion per year.”

An overwhelming majority of Americans believe the government has an obligation to protect consumers from unfair and deceptive practices in the marketplace. Despite bipartisan support to increase airfare transparency in Washington, the powerful airline industry and their lobbyists have prevented relief for consumers, who are often paying more to fly as a result.

### **About The Air Travel Fairness Coalition**

[Air Travel Fairness](#), which represents the interests of more than 70,000 travelers, as well as consumer and business organizations, believes increased, genuine transparency is good for American families, good for the economy and good for competition. For more information, visit [www.airtravelfairness.org](http://www.airtravelfairness.org).

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