



U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

PRESS RELEASE

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United Airlines Settles EEOC Disability Discrimination Suit

Federal Agency Obtains Policy Changes and \$600,000 for Reservation Agents With Disabilities

SEATTLE — United Airlines has agreed to settle a federal lawsuit alleging that the company violated the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) when it refused to allow employees with disabilities to work reduced hourly schedules as a reasonable accommodation, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) announced today.

In addition to paying \$600,000 to a group of reservation agents with disabilities, United will end its blanket policy against reduced hourly schedules and provide training to staffers who administer United's reasonable accommodation process, according to the terms of a three-year consent decree approved by the court (*EEOC v. United Airlines*, C-06-01407 TSZ).

Prior to 2003, United had permitted reservations sales and service representatives to work reduced hourly schedules as an accommodation for employees' various disabilities, including multiple sclerosis, DeQuervain's tendonitis and carpal tunnel, and myasthenia gravis (a muscle condition). By suddenly abolishing its long-standing practice and policy of providing reduced hourly schedules, United required all reservation sales and service representatives who could not work their full bid schedules to either retire or go out on extended leave, and then terminated them when their leave ran out. These policies and practices violate the ADA, the EEOC said.

One worker who had worked for United for 25 years and had worked a reduced-hour schedule for 23 years prior to the policy change, said, "Contributing 25 years of work, in a way compatible with my health, was positive for me, for United and for society. A sweeping policy that disregards individual circumstances doesn't give someone like me a chance to do my job. I took my case to the EEOC, and I'm glad to know that United is going to stop its blanket policy on work hours."

The ADA protects individuals with disabilities from employment discrimination and requires employers to make reasonable accommodations to employees and applicants with disabilities, unless the accommodation would create an undue hardship. After a neutral investigation conducted by the EEOC's Honolulu and Seattle offices and after first attempting to reach a voluntary settlement through conciliation, the EEOC filed the lawsuit in U.S. District Court for the Western District of Washington.

EEOC San Francisco Regional Attorney William R. Tamayo said, "United conceived of this policy as a cost-cutting measure -- a means of tightening the belt. However, this action did not lessen any monetary strain for the company or boost the department's performance. Thinking creatively and flexibly to retain skilled and experienced workers would be a better survival strategy for companies than stereotyping workers with disabilities as expensive and expendable."

EEOC San Francisco District Director Michael Baldonado noted, "Decisions regarding reasonable accommodations for a disability must be made on a case-by-case basis. A blanket policy that takes options off the table by setting minimum work hours not only violates the ADA, but it also may have a negative impact on the company's morale, productivity and bottom line."

According to www.united.com, United Airlines (NASDAQ: UUA) is one of the largest international carriers based in the United States, with 52,000 employees worldwide and operating nearly 3,000 flights a day to more than 200 domestic and international destinations from its hubs in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Denver, Chicago and Washington, D.C.

The EEOC enforces federal laws prohibiting employment discrimination. Further information about the EEOC is available on its web site at www.eeoc.gov.