



Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Office of the Attorney General

2nd Floor Hon. Juan A. Sablan Memorial Bldg.
Caller Box 10007, Capitol Hill
Saipan, MP 96950

EDWARD MANIBUSAN
Attorney General

For Immediate Release

Contact: Andrea M. Kaipat
670-237-7500
andrea_kaipat@cnmioag.org

ATTORNEY GENERAL MANIBUSAN ANNOUNCES AIRLINE PASSENGER PROTECTION PARTNERSHIP WITH U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Office of the Attorney General, Saipan – Attorney General Edward Manibusan announces a new partnership with the U.S. Department of Transportation (“DOT”) to review and resolve consumer complaints against airlines and ticket agents. The agreement streamlines how Attorney General Manibusan and DOT will work together to review consumer complaints and identify violations of federal aviation consumer protection requirements.

The new process for addressing consumer complaints against air travel companies, outlined in a memorandum of understanding between the CNMI Attorney General’s Office and the DOT, reinforces state and federal commitments to protect the rights of the travelers. The CNMI is one of 25 states or territories that either signed an MOU with the DOT or expressed an interest in executing such an agreement. This action comes at a time when complaints about flight disruptions, lack of refunds, and lost or delayed baggage continue to be core passenger concerns.

“Air travel is fundamental to the citizens of our community. Entering this MOU with the DOT solidifies and strengthens the commitment of both parties to protect the rights of our airline consumers. Customers booking airline tickets deserve to be fairly treated and know exactly what they are buying and to get what they pay for under the law. This coordinated effort with the DOT will provide better protection for our citizens and our visitors,” says Attorney General Manibusan.

“We take our mission to protect consumers seriously, and today's launch of the Airline Passenger Protection Partnership is an important milestone in that effort,” said U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg. “By partnering with a bipartisan group of state attorneys general, the U.S. Department of Transportation has expanded our ability to hold airlines and ticket agents accountable and protect passengers from unfair or deceptive practices.”

Civil Division

Telephone: (670) 237-7500
Facsimile: (670) 664-2349

Criminal Division

Telephone: (670) 237-7600
Facsimile: (670) 234-7016

Attorney General Investigation Division

Telephone: (670) 237-7628
Facsimile: (670) 234-7016

Victim Witness Advocacy Unit

Telephone: (670) 237-7602
Facsimile: (670) 234-7016

Federal law places the central responsibility for protecting airline consumers with the DOT. Under this historic agreement, the CNMI Office of the Attorney General will be authorized to investigate consumer complaints against air carriers, ticket agents, and other air travel companies supervised by the DOT. The OAG will work with consumers and companies to resolve complaints, and if necessary, will refer complaints to the DOT's Office of Aviation Consumer Protection (OACP). The OACP will prioritize their review, include attorney general's office staff on letters of inquiry to those companies based on those referrals, and consult with the attorney general's office before determining next steps.

The DOT will also provide technical assistance and training to staff in the Office of the Attorney General and will meet at least once a year with the CNMI OAG to assess ongoing efforts and will update on any actions taken in response to state-referred complaints.

The MOU will last for two years, and the CNMI OAG and the DOT may agree to extend it at two-year intervals after the agreement ends.

Others that have signed an MOU with the DOT include the attorneys general from California, Colorado, Connecticut, the District of Columbia, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Nevada, New York, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Wisconsin.

Those that have expressed an interest in executing such an agreement with DOT include the attorneys general from Delaware, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Oregon, Tennessee, Vermont, and Washington.

#####