



PRESS RELEASE

11-20-17

American Airlines and Envoy Air to Pay \$9.8 Million to Settle EEOC Disability Suit

Airlines' Policies Discriminated Against Disabled Employees, Federal Agency Charges

PHOENIX - American Airlines and Envoy Air will pay \$9.8 million in stock, which is worth over \$14 million if cashed in today, and provide other significant relief to settle a nationwide class disability discrimination lawsuit filed by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), the agency announced today. The EEOC's suit said the airlines unlawfully denied reasonable accommodations to hundreds of employees.

"This matter highlights the critical role of the Americans with Disabilities Act in getting people back to work as quickly as possible," said EEOC Acting Chair Victoria A. Lipnic. "The parties deserve credit for working diligently to bring this matter to resolution."

According to the EEOC's suit, American and Envoy violated federal law by requiring their employees to have no restrictions before they could return to work following a medical leave. Under this policy, if an employee had restrictions, American and Envoy refused to allow them to return to work and failed to determine if there were reasonable accommodations that would allow the employee to return to work with restrictions.

Such alleged conduct violates the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which prohibits discrimination based on disability and also requires an employer to provide reasonable accommodation to employees with disabilities unless doing so would cause significant difficulty or expense for the employer. If employees with disabilities are not able to do their current job, even with a reasonable accommodation, employers are obligated to look for a reassignment to another position for those employees.

The EEOC filed suit in U.S. District Court for the District of Arizona, Civil Action No. 17-cv-04059-SPL, after first attempting to reach a pre-litigation settlement through its conciliation process and continued negotiations prior to filing suit. The consent decree resolves the EEOC's lawsuit and several charges of discrimination filed by individuals with the EEOC. The systemic investigation was conducted by the EEOC's Phoenix District Office.

In addition to the \$9.8 million in stock, the two-year decree includes injunctions against engaging in any future discrimination or retaliation based on disability, and requires the companies to adopt policies that ensure reasonable accommodations are provided to persons with disabilities. American and Envoy will provide mandatory periodic training on the ADA to employees. The settlement applies to all American and Envoy employees throughout the country.

EEOC Deputy General Counsel James L. Lee said, "We are pleased the parties were able to resolve this important case without resorting to prolonged and expensive litigation, and we are proud of the Commission's long record of protecting people with disabilities from workplace discrimination."

Elizabeth Cadle, district director for the Phoenix office, added, "This settlement demonstrates the need for employers to have good ADA policies. That means policies which consider employers' obligations to provide reassignment without competition as a reasonable accommodation for employees with disabilities who become unable to do their current job even with accommodations."

EEOC Regional Attorney Mary O'Neill added, "This consent decree is the result of productive and thoughtful negotiations with American. We appreciate American and Envoy working with the EEOC to reach a settlement. In addition to providing meaningful monetary relief for hundreds of former employees, the settlement contains important equitable relief, including company policy changes and training designed to provide people with disabilities equal opportunities in the workplace."

According to its website, www.aa.com, American Airlines, headquartered in Fort Worth, Texas, is an airline that operates an average of nearly 6,700 flights per day to nearly 350 destinations in more than 50 countries, and employs over 120,000 people.

The EEOC advances opportunity in the workplace by enforcing federal laws prohibiting employment discrimination. More information is available at www.eeoc.gov. Stay connected with the latest EEOC news by subscribing to our [email updates](#).