



National  
Multiple Sclerosis  
Society

## YOU CAN ADVOCATE TO IMPROVE AIR TRAVEL ACCESSIBILITY

Create your own WOW-HOW-NOW to help you do it.

### WOW: MY IMPACT STATEMENT

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**Examples:** “Any time I travel by plane, it requires a lot of preparation to try to make sure it is a safe experience for me—and even then, there’s a lot that goes wrong. For example, on one trip, the left wheel of my wheelchair was damaged after being stowed under the plane, and I had to get it repaired before I could use it. It’s past time for air travel to be an accessible form of transportation for everyone.”

“I do not use an assistive mobility device, but since I live with MS, the future is unpredictable. It doesn’t make sense to me that air travel is still not accessible. Many people in the MS community risk their health and safety trying to transfer to a seat and often lack access to a lavatory when they travel. It shouldn’t be this way.”

### HOW: IMPACT ON THE MS COMMUNITY AND POLICY MAKER’S ROLE IN THE SOLUTION

(You do not have to use all of the points below—just pick 1-2 that best support your impact statement.)

- About 1/3 of individuals with MS report using a mobility device at least some of the time.
- Airplanes still do not provide for even basic accessibility for passengers with disabilities—particularly those who use a wheelchair—such as access to lavatories or an accessible path of travel on the plane.
- People with MS and other health conditions deserve to have equal access to travel for work and pleasure, to be able to see their loved ones, and attend important events.
- Survey results show that among people with disabilities, 16% said they had been dropped and 23% said they had been injured while using an aisle chair to board and deplane.
- Survey results also show that among those who travel by air with a wheelchair or scooter, almost 60 percent reported their device having been damaged and almost 56 percent experienced delays in its return. Seventeen percent reported having their wheelchair or scooter lost.

### NOW: THE ASK FOR POLICY MAKERS

Can we count on you to cosponsor the Air Carrier Access Amendments Act and support its inclusion in the 2023 FAA Reauthorization?



My name is Dr. Scott Crawford, and I live with multiple sclerosis (MS). I earned my Ph.D. in 1995 from the University of Southern Mississippi, with a subspecialty in Neuropsychology. In 1999, I developed a rapidly progressive form of MS and had to give up my career in 2000. I use a power wheelchair for mobility, and cope with severe fatigue, spasticity, and weak vocal cords. Over the years, I have become a passionate advocate in the areas of transportation and public access to streets, sidewalks, and buildings.

As most of my friends who fly using their wheelchairs know, every time you fly, you take a risk. My primary wheelchair (aka, my “legs”) is an extension of me. I know that if anything were to happen to it when I travel, I would be in big trouble. That’s because my primary chair has support specifically tailored for me; it provides trunk control and features that prevent new pressure sores from developing and that keep my existing one from potentially getting worse. Pressure sores are a huge health risk for people who spend a majority of their time in a chair.

Disassembling and stowing larger wheelchairs in the cargo holds of airplanes is complex, quite cumbersome, and fraught with the risk of damage. My primary chair is an intricate device that would take weeks or months to be repaired and I absolutely cannot go without my device for that long. I can’t take the risks, so I simply don’t travel with it.

That means that when I fly, I travel in a non-custom, “expendable,” back-up chair. This is a smaller, simpler chair. If it gets damaged, I can do without it for a couple months if I have my primary wheelchair. The problem with the backup chair is that it’s not made for me. It really is hard to use; it’s not safe, it’s not comfortable—I can’t even rest my arms on the arm rests. The consequence is that I am in pain during every trip I take, and I risk exacerbating my existing sacral pressure wound.

It’s worth it to me to travel because I know I make a difference through my advocacy work. But I should not have to sacrifice my health, safety and comfort every time I travel by air. What people with disabilities need is to be able to board aircraft with our “legs” attached. Air travel will never be accessible for people like me without being able to board the plane in our chairs and be secured, just like in a train or a bus. Until that happens, I’ll keep advocating.