

# VFW Thanks Airlines for Dropping Military Luggage Fees

Aug 27, 2008

**WASHINGTON** — The new national commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. is saying "thank you" to the American airline industry for allowing military personnel traveling on orders to now check a third piece of luggage without paying an additional fee.

"I am extremely grateful to the airlines for agreeing with the VFW that dropping the fee was the right decision to make for our troops," said Glen Gardner, a Vietnam veteran from Round Rock, Texas, just north of Austin. Gardner was elected to lead the nation's largest organization of combat veterans on Aug. 21 at the VFW's 109th national convention in Orlando, Fla.

The baggage fee issue surfaced last month in a Texas newspaper article about a young soldier being charged \$100 for a third piece of checked luggage. The soldier was headed for additional training before deploying to Iraq.

All major U.S. carriers were allowing military to check two bags for free, but the \$100 industry norm for the third checked bag was hitting young troops directly in their wallets, despite some assurances from the Defense Department that the fee might be reimbursable at a later date. The VFW weighed in by asking the Air Transport Association to work with its member airlines to exempt military personnel traveling on orders from paying baggage fees on a third piece of checked luggage.

"A \$100 is a huge out-of-pocket expense to someone who doesn't earn very much," said Gardner, "and that's why this luggage fee waiver is so important. Our troops can now properly focus on their mission instead of remembering to complete a travel voucher in a war zone."

In a letter of appreciation [\[read letter\]](#) sent Wednesday to ATA president James C. May, the VFW national commander expressed his thanks to the association for facilitating the fee waiver with its member airlines.

"Waiving the third checked bag fee was a decision that needed to be made," wrote Gardner. "The VFW is very appreciative of ATA's understanding of our call to action, and very grateful

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for the subsequent actions taken by your member airlines. U.S. air carriers have always been huge supporters of our troops; their decisions to waive the third checked bag fee now amplifies that strong support."