



# Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service

February 8, 2017

United Airlines  
233 S. Wacker Drive  
Chicago, IL 60606

Dear United Airlines:

I am writing to you as the representative of officers who serve in the United States Public Health Service (USPHS) to request that you include them in your military free baggage program. You probably don't know anything about the USPHS, so I'll start by saying that it is an all-officer corps of 6600 professionals that has existed since 1889. Its members comprise one of the seven federal uniformed services, along with the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, etc. Its members are given a commission by the President, just like officers in the armed forces. They wear Navy uniforms with PHS insignia, unless they serve the Coast Guard, in which case they wear Coast Guard uniforms.

They receive military pay and allowances, shop at military exchanges and commissaries, and receive medical care for themselves and their families through either a military treatment facility or TRICARE—just like those serving in the armed forces. They deploy domestically and overseas just as do members of the armed forces, and almost 900 of them have deployed with the U.S. military to Iraq and Afghanistan. They travel officially and often in uniform. Unless your employees check the ID card, they are apt to think that they are in the U.S. Navy. ID cards for USPHS officers are identical to those carried by members of the Army, Navy, etc., with the words "Uniformed Services" at the top, just like an Army or Navy ID, followed by the agency, which would be "Army," "Navy," or "USPHS." ID cards for officers in the USPHS are issued by the Defense Department. USPHS officers are veterans under federal law and are entitled to be buried in VA cemeteries. They were recognized as veterans in the ceremony program at Arlington National Cemetery this past November 11.

United Airlines is the air carrier of choice for many PHS officers, and they do not understand why you all are treating them as if they were not one of this country's seven uniformed services. United Airlines is not the first private sector corporation to whom we have reached out on behalf of these officers. We did the same with the Disney Corporation, which had long excluded USPHS officers from its "Military Salute" program. Disney has now embraced our contention that these officers deserve the same discounts as are given to members of the military, and Disney gives such a discount to them.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions relating to this request.

Sincerely,

Col. James T. Currie, USA (ret.)  
Executive Director