

Gov. Christie Urging POTUS To Stop Overbooking: United's Actions Were Unacceptable And Outrageous

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Transcript:

Alisyn Camerota: Now, New Jersey Governor Chris Christie is calling for action, and Governor Christie joins us, now. Good morning.

Governor Christie: Good morning, Alisyn, how are you?

Alisyn Camerota: I'm well. Who do you blame for this ugly incident?

Governor Christie: United. Listen, I have unique knowledge on this, because, you know, Newark Liberty International Airport is a United hub. They control 70 percent of the flights in and out of Newark, and if I can tell you I could fill a book with all the complaints I have about United Airlines from constituents who say they're bad.

Alisyn Camerota: Is there something particular about United, United does something different in your mind than other airlines?

Governor Christie: I can only tell you from experience that I've heard from constituents in New Jersey and my own experience, that I don't think that United has ever really recovered from their merger with Continental. I don't think that they've ever established a culture, and you can tell that, Alisyn, from listening to their CEO, who had three different tries to try to say what everybody could see here, which is this is unacceptable to have someone pay for a ticket,

reserve a seat, be seated and then dragged off the plane physically by law enforcement officers at the direction of United. It's outrageous. That's why I've asked the administration, the Trump Administration, to say, stop the overbooking until we set some more different rules about how the airlines can conduct themselves.

Alisyn Camerota: Now of course, that, your suggestion, and what you're asking the Trump Administration for actually wouldn't have solved this problem. This wasn't an overbooked flight. This was a full flight and then United decided that they wanted to get their four staffers to another airport and that took precedence over these passengers seat.

Governor Christie: Well, it shouldn't take precedent over the people who are paying and the fact of the matter is, what I'm talking about is the right of the passenger. When you pay a ticket, and as everybody knows, these tickets are not cheap, and airline travel is getting more and more expensive and United is making more and more money. If you get seated on the plane, this is not asking for people to give up their seat before they get on, you seat them and then you come on and say, well our employees are more important than the traveling customers. That's why I think DOT, Federal Department of Transportation, has to stop the overbooking rules and stop giving the airlines latitude and take a breath and examine this entire thing. Because I will tell you, passengers are fed up and they should be.

Alisyn Camerota: Have you expressed your complaints to United directly?

Governor Christie: Yes.

Alisyn Camerota: And what's been the response?

Governor Christie: No response yet.

Alisyn Camerota: Ok, well we have a response. Not to you, but from the United CEO. As you point out, he's taken a few different bites of this apple...

Governor Christie: Yea.

Alisyn Camerota: First, he suggested to his employees that the passenger was being belligerent. Then, by today, he had worked around to sounding more conciliatory and more sensitive. Here's what he just said on another morning show. Let me play it for you.

Oscar Nuno, United CEO: We are not going to put a law enforcement official to take them off-

Rebecca Jarvis: A law enforcement official will never come on one of your planes again?

Oscar Nuno: To remove a booked, paid, seating passenger. We can't do that.

Alisyn Camerota: Does that go far enough saying that no law enforcement will ever drag another passenger from the plane.

Governor Christie: Well, that's a good start. I mean, you know, the fact is I think most people would have thought this would have never happened anyway. That, you know, why do they offer you the option of paying you to get off the plane, if it's not an option? That once people didn't want to take the pay to get off the plane, they wanted to get to their destination, then you're going to call the police in to drag you off for a United employee? Work on some other solution to the problem, do better planning, but instead what they do is the customer is always last. With United, the customer is always last, and the CEO proved that by having to take three turns to simply say, I'm sorry. How could you not look at that video and be mortified as the leader of an organization that your organization permitted that to happen? But it shows you what little regard United holds their customers in. And I'm telling you, I hear these stories over and over again out of Newark International Airport about how awful United treats their customers.

Alisyn Camerota: By the way, I'm not sure he can't make a blanket statement that no law enforcement will ever drag another passenger off the plane, because sometimes it is warranted. Sometimes you have an actual incident. So, it's a little bit dangerous him saying we will never, ever do that again.

Governor Christie: Well, Alisyn, this is what you know, you've seen this many times in your job, this is what happens when people don't really know what they believe. And they take a couple different shots at it. Now he's going to the other extreme to try to seem more compassionate, more understanding, when, in fact, he has a tin ear on this, and he proved that by sending that internal email that blamed the customer. I thought the customer was always right. Now, we know they're not always right, but that's the attitude that business should start from, but because of this business, they are given so much latitude by the government to conduct it the way they want to, that they feel like they can disregard common courtesy to a customer.


Alisyn Camerota: So you want to see that change. Will you ever fly United again?

Governor Christie: I'm going to have to, it's 70 percent of the flights from Newark Airport. So you know, this, I'm just like any other person who lives in the northern part of my state. If I don't want to come to New York City and fly out of LaGuardia or Kennedy, which is much less convenient, or drive to Philadelphia, which is much less convenient, I am almost required to fly United because of the dominance of this airline at Newark International Airport. And that's why there are so many complaints, I'll tell you this, Alisyn, this is easy to fix. The government should take a deep breath and say prove to us what these rules should be, because you've obviously abused them.

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