



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Daniel L. Squadron

## Senator Squadron, Assemblymember Crespo Intro Bill To Crack Down On Predatory Travel Agencies

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**NEW YORK** - Today, State Senator Squadron and Assemblymember Crespo announced legislation strengthening the "Truth In Travel Act." The bill requires travel agents to provide receipts at the time of purchase for services like travel tickets, so consumers have proof to help combat fraud. Additionally, the legislation makes penalties more appropriate for the level of fraud when travel agents violate existing law.

The legislation comes in response to the recent arrest of travel operator Vivian Cheng. Reportedly, Cheng defrauded hundreds of clients -- filing for bankruptcy shortly after accepting thousands of dollars for travel arrangements that were never completed. In the Vivian Chen travel agency incident, some community members expressed difficulty proving they were victims due to lack of service documentation, which the Squadron/Crespo bill would address.

"Leaving New Yorkers stranded when things go south shouldn't fly," said **State Senator Daniel Squadron**. "Consumers need to be able to trust travel agents, and know they have protections when problems arise. I thank Assemblymember Crespo for joining me in introducing this

legislation and the community members who have raised this issue based on the terrible situation Vivian Cheng's customers have undergone."

"Updating our laws to combat consumer fraud is the responsibility of elected officials. Other industries and firms providing goods and services to consumers are required to provide receipts for purchases. This bill requires the same behavior by travel agents and it will increase protections against fraud," stated **Assemblyman Marcos A. Crespo**. "The leadership of Senator Squadron and consumer advocates on this issue should be commended."

"Preventing fraud and protecting consumers is one of government's most important jobs -- and when we find weak spots in the law, we must strengthen them," said **Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer**. "I'm pleased my colleague Sen. Squadron is acting to protect New Yorkers with this new legislation."

"I want to thank Senator Squadron and Assemblymember Crespo for addressing this vulnerability for travelers. When you pack your bags, having the security that your tickets are legitimate and will be honored is fundamental and should be strongly guarded. This legislation will protect people and help them travel with peace of mind," said **Assemblymember Sheldon Silver**.

"One of the best ways that travelers can protect themselves from predatory travel agency scams is to have documentation of payment. Coming in the wake of a travel agency scam in my district that defrauded hundreds of people, this piece of common-sense legislation is a timely and welcome addition to our fraud-prevention efforts. I applaud Senator Squadron and Assemblymember Crespo for taking action to protect New Yorkers from criminals looking to take advantage of honest people for a quick buck," said **Councilmember Margaret Chin**.

"Paying a travel agent to arrange a trip is one of those transactions that leaves the consumer vulnerable to a possible scam since payment is given upfront before any services are delivered," said **NYC Department of Consumer Affairs Commissioner Julie Menin**. "I applaud Senator Squadron and Assembly Member Crespo for their work to further protect New Yorkers and look forward to working with them on this issue."

**NYPIRG Legislative Counsel Russ Haven** said "Consumers seeking business or vacation travel want to get to their destination, not be taken for a ride. New Yorkers work too hard to have their money and a well deserved vacation stolen out from under them. Senator Squadron and Assemblymember Crespo are right to update this 40-year old law to make sure it's protecting travel consumers in 2015."

"I am very happy that a legislation is introduced to strengthen the "Truth in Travel Act" to protect travel consumers from fraud. Everyday there are victims that are cheated from buying travel tickets and not given service documentation and have difficulty proving it when cheated, the new legislation will help fight fraud in our community," said **Eddie Chiu, Lin Sing Association Director**.

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