Foster Garvey

Duff on Hospitality Law

Online Travel Update: Biden Calls for Legislation Limiting Unfair Fees

02.03.23

Our weekly Online Travel Update for the week ending February 3, 2023, is below. This week's Update features of number of stories detailing the Biden Administration's growing efforts to address "unfair" fees, including hotel resort fees. Enjoy.

- **Biden Calls for Legislation Limiting Unfair Fees**. Add ticket agency fees (thank you Taylor Swift) to the growing list of "unfair" fees being targeted by the Biden Administration. In comments at last week's meeting of the White House Competition Council, the President called on Congress to pass legislation (the Junk Fee Prevention Act) limiting fees in several industries, including an outright ban on "surprise resort and destination fees." The likelihood of any substantive legislation coming out of Congress - particularly given the strong business interests that will likely line up to oppose any such legislation and the general divisive (dysfunctional) nature of Congress - is very low. While federal legislation may be a remote possibility, the same headwinds may not hinder similar efforts at the federal regulatory level (FTC) or individual state level. This week's news of possible federal legislation on the issue comes as several clients are hearing rumblings or actually receiving written notice of increased efforts to reign in resort fees at the state level.
- **Google's Overall Advertising Revenues May Be Down, But Not for Travel**. While overall Google's parent, Alphabet, saw a fourth decline in overall advertising revenue, travel advertising revenue actually increased over the latest quarter.
- **Rising Interest Rates Increase Value of Merchant Bookings**. With Expedia reported to have earned $20 million in interest income in the third quarter of last year, in part, on funds held as part of prepaid guest bookings, it is no wonder other platforms are getting into the payments business (yes, we recognize that there are many other benefits as well). Airbnb earned $58 million in interest income.
- **Event Platform, CVENT, Reportedly for Sale**. If a sale does occur, it won't be the first time the platform is taken private. This time, private equity heavy weight, Blackstone, is the rumored suitor. Will a sale mean changes to the platform's management (and impossible contracting practices)? Likely not, as CVENT's management stayed largely intact through CVENT's many prior transitions.

Have a great week everyone.

Biden criticizes airlines and hotels for 'unfair fees'

February 2, 2023 via travelweekly.com

© 2026 Foster Garvey PC. All Rights Reserved.

President Joe Biden took swipes at airlines and hotels Wednesday as he called on Congress to limit certain extra charges they impose on consumers. “These unfair fees add up,” he said, speaking just before a meeting of the White House Competition Committee. Biden said Congress should restrict airline seat-assignment fees ...

White House unveils new credit card fee regulations, calls for legislation targeting other ‘junk’ fees

February 2, 2023 via MLex

US President Joe Biden announced new Consumer Financial Protection Bureau regulations targeting excessive credit card fees during a meeting of the White House Competition Council today. Biden also called on Congress to enact legislation cracking down on excessive online ticketing fees and the elimination of airline fees for family members to sit with young children, surprise resort and destination fees and exorbitant early termination fees for TV, phone and internet service. The council also discussed strategic priorities "to institutionalize the President's competition agenda in each agency and deliver cost saving measures for Americans."

Google's Travel Business Proves Stubbornly Resilient as Other Advertisers Retreated

February 2, 2023 via Skift

Skift Take Google is actively taking a new look at its business priorities, propelled by companywide bets on artificial intelligence. Google Travel is clearly an important part of its advertising business, but will it be as shiny as others? Dennis Schaal While Alphabet, Google's parent, saw advertising revenue tick down ...

Online Travel Companies Make a Bundle Investing Customer Cash

February 1, 2023 via Skift

Skift Take The major thing new in online travel companies holding onto customer cash and investing it is that interest rates are a lot higher, and they are taking advantage. The rich get richer. Dennis Schaal Dennis’ Online Travel Briefing Editor's Note: Every Wednesday, Executive Editor and online travel rockstar ...

Cvent Said to Be Exploring a Sale

January 31, 2023 via Skift Meetings

Skift Take Cvent, a leading meetings, events, and hospitality technology provider, is reportedly looking into selling with private-equity firm Blackstone interested. Andrea Doyle Events and hospitality technology provider Cvent is reportedly looking into selling. According to the Wall Street Journal, the company is valued at more than $4 billion. Private-equity ...

Google Flights Could Shift Strategy After Heavy Layoffs

© 2026 Foster Garvey PC. All Rights Reserved.

January 30, 2023 via Skift

Skift Take Why doesn't Google promote Google Travel as a one-stop shop? The layoffs at Google Flights show there's too much ad revenue in play on the Google.com side of the flights business to merit such an all-in approach. Dennis Schaal Especially heavy layoffs at Google Flights, including senior managers …

Posted in Online Travel Update

Authored by

Greg Duff

Principal|Seattle

206.816.1470 greg.duff@foster.com

© 2026 Foster Garvey PC. All Rights Reserved.