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# What's The Real Price Of That Flight Or Concert Ticket? New Laws Aim To Help Expose Hidden Fees

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It's a common hazard of shopping online: You think you're getting a good deal on a flight, hotel stay or concert ticket, but when you go to check out, you find out the total price has jumped, and now that deal isn't looking so good after all.



across so many industries that they've caught the attention of regulators, state lawmakers and even the president.

“Folks are tired of being taken advantage of and being played for suckers,” said President Joe Biden as he announced a new crackdown on these charges. “These junk fees can add up to hundreds of dollars, weighing down family budgets and making it harder to pay family bills.”

## New Laws, Rules Would Protect Consumers From Junk Fees

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The Federal Trade Commission on October 11 proposed a rule that would require businesses to display the total price of a product or service up front and indicate whether the extra fees are refundable. It would also bar companies from misrepresenting what fees are for.

Just days earlier, in California, Governor Gavin Newsom had signed a law that will require most businesses in the state to advertise and offer prices that include all mandatory charges, except for taxes.

The California law, which takes effect on July 1, 2024, excludes food delivery services such as DoorDash or Grubhub.

Pennsylvania lawmakers are considering similar legislation. On October 18, the state House passed a measure that would require ticket, lodging and food delivery platforms to display all mandatory charges “at the point in the shopping experience where the consumer is first shown the product or service.” That bill has now been sent to the Pennsylvania Senate for consideration.

These moves could potentially affect a wide range of industries, including hotels, airlines, online ticket vendors, car rentals, [apartment landlords](#), banks and [credit card companies](#). The rules don't ban businesses from charging fees, but they do require businesses to clearly show customers those fees in the total price, up front.

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## What Is a Junk Fee?

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business very little or nothing to provide, such as seating a family together on a flight. The FTC estimates junk fees cost consumers tens of billions of dollars every year.

“By hiding the total price, these junk fees make it harder for consumers to shop for the best product or service and punish businesses who are honest up front,” said FTC Chair Lina M. Khan in a news release.

Further, if any business is found to have [misleading fees](#), both the FTC and [Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, or CFPB, have enforcement powers](#) that could allow them to go after the company and force it to reimburse consumers.

## Some Common Junk Fees and How To Avoid Them

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The list of charges that might qualify as junk fees under proposed federal rules is extensive. Here are some that have been mentioned by the Federal Trade Commission and President Biden. Some will be covered by the California law taking effect next year.

**Airline charges:** President Biden has repeatedly raised concerns about fees that airlines charge for rebooking a flight that’s been canceled for reasons beyond passengers’ control. The U.S. Department of Transportation is proposing rules that would [require airlines to reimburse customers](#) for certain canceled or delayed flights.

When researching flights, look at the fine print in airline [rebooking and cancellation policies](#), and at what [additional travel insurance](#) might cover.

**Concert ticket fees:** Online ticket sellers are known for inflating the resale cost of a ticket. High prices and fees and other snags led to a congressional investigation this spring into ticket sales for Taylor Swift’s Eras tour. Since then, Live Nation and Ticketmaster have promised to disclose all-in ticket prices up front. You may not be able to avoid ticket fees, but knowing the full price in advance can help you stay within your budget and avoid nasty surprises.

**Hotel fees:** Many hotels now charge some kind of resort fee, typically \$30 to \$50 per night. But these costs may be difficult to notice when you’re booking a room online. In some cases, you might pay a fee up front when [booking a reservation](#) and then another fee once you’re at the hotel or leaving it.

Be sure to read the fine print on every page before booking. You can also book your stay using [rewards credit cards](#) or simply call the [hotel to negotiate certain fees](#)—like a charge for daily parking or breakfast that you don’t need. You can also dispute certain fees or charges with your credit card company, though the process takes time.



customers faced an average of 36% in added fees on top of the nightly rates.

While these charges might be hard to negotiate with individual hosts, you might find another [Airbnb rental](#) in the same area with a lower cleaning fee or a nearby hotel with fewer cleaning and service charges. Research thoroughly when renting from individual homeowners.

**Bank fees:** The CFPB released guidance on October 11 warning large financial institutions against charging fees when consumers ask for information about their own accounts. On October 19, the CFPB proposed a rule aimed at making it easier for consumers to [switch banks](#).

To avoid paying bank fees, brush up on the minimums and requirements that apply to your account. If there's a charge to use out-of-network ATMs, for example, check your bank's locator app to find a machine you can use without incurring a fee.

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