



UNITED STATES
CIVILIAN BOARD OF CONTRACT APPEALS

December 6, 2010

CBCA 2160-RELO

In the Matter of WILLIAM A. BANKS

William A. Banks, Seattle, WA, Claimant.

Cheryl Holman, Assistant Chief, PCS Travel Division, Financial Services Center, Department of Veterans Affairs, Austin, TX, appearing for Department of Veterans Affairs.

VERGILIO, Board Judge.

Claimant, who personally purchased airline ticket on day of travel in connection with return from househunting trip, is not entitled to more than the Government rate for the city-pair flight already reimbursed. Although claimant earlier had reserved a ticket, claimant did not follow agency procedures to complete ticket purchase. Instructions were to travel by city-pair flight, if available, thereby capping reimbursable costs.

On September 23, 2010, the Board received a claim from William A. Banks (claimant) regarding a relocation arising from travel associated with an authorized househunting trip in February 2010 in connection with a permanent change of duty station within the United States. The civilian employee of the Department of Veterans Affairs (agency) made a reservation through an authorized travel agent for the return flight; he would arrive at the destination through other arrangements. A ticket at the Government rate of \$444 was reserved. The claimant did not provide the agent with the necessary information for the ticket to be purchased by the agency. The claimant did not take action to ensure that he had a valid ticket until the day of travel (a Saturday). On that day, he called the authorized agent, who informed him that, lacking the requisite information, the agent could not purchase the ticket at that time; the claimant could wait until Monday for the purchase or purchase a ticket on his own. The claimant did the latter, paying \$1051.40 and departing that day.

The applicable Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) specifies that the agency determines the procedures to be followed for authorized househunting trips. 41 CFR 302-5.5 (2009)

(FTR 302-5.5). To be reimbursed, an employee must satisfy agency-established conditions. FTR 302-5.6. Here, the agency established the mode of transportation as utilization of a city-pair flight, if available. Regulation specifies: “Your agency will pay for your transportation expenses by the authorized mode(s). If you travel by any other mode(s), your agency will pay your transportation expenses not to exceed the cost of transportation by the authorized mode(s).” FTR 302-5.14. The agency provided the claimant with oral and written instruction as to what must be done to purchase the ticket (whom to contact such that the ticket could be charged to a centrally billed account and whom to contact to confirm that information had been provided). Although the claimant timely reserved a ticket through an authorized agent, the claimant did not follow the instructions to accomplish payment. Under the regulations, the claimant is not entitled to additional money; he has been reimbursed the cost of the city-pair flight.

The explanations and attempts to shift blame to the travel agent offered by the claimant are unconvincing factually and do not alter the result. The claimant failed to follow express, specific procedures to purchase the ticket. Moreover, it was not prudent or reasonable to wait until the day of departure (particularly when on a Saturday) to make inquiries about the ticket.

The agency has made payment in accordance with regulation. The Board denies the claim.

JOSEPH A. VERGILIO
Board Judge