

## NWA-AFA MEC Weekly Hotline Message February 13, 2009

### **MEC MEETING NOTES AVAILABLE ONLINE**

Please click on the "Articles" tab and then on "[MEC Minutes](#)" at [www.nwaafa.org](http://www.nwaafa.org) for informal meeting notes from this week's Master Executive Council meeting. Official minutes will be posted after approval by the Master Executive Council.

### **A BANNER WEEK FOR FLIGHT ATTENDANTS ON TWO FRONTS!**

In a stunning move, the House of Representatives passed the **Airline Crew FMLA Technical Corrections Act (HR 912)** in a unanimous voice vote on Monday, February 9. The AFA-CWA had been moving to have the bill introduced this week by Representatives Tim Bishop (D-NY) and Thad McCotter (R-MI), but because of the bipartisan work done by all, the Democratic and Republican leadership on this legislation agreed to introduce the bill immediately. Not only was the bill introduced with an overwhelming number of bipartisan co-sponsors (53), but the leadership moved quickly on passage of the bill. Just a few short hours after the bill was introduced on the House floor IT WAS CONSIDERED QUICKLY FOR FINAL PASSAGE.

Late in the afternoon of February 9, the House FMLA bill was immediately brought up for final passage on the House suspension calendar, which is a legislative procedure used to quickly pass non-controversial bills. So, just a few short hours after introduction of the bill it was passed out of the House of Representatives by a unanimous voice vote! This is virtually unprecedented. Congratulations to all of you that sent in letters and called your Representatives to make this a reality. For a copy of the legislation please go to [www.nwaafa.org/committees/govaffairs](http://www.nwaafa.org/committees/govaffairs).

The House victory is only half the journey to it becoming law. Now, the bill goes to the U.S. Senate where Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) is going to lead our efforts to pass the legislation. We are hopeful that the Senate will also facilitate the passage of their companion bill in an expedited manner allowing crew members the same benefits under the law that other full-time American workers have enjoyed since the original FMLA law was enacted in 1993. Once the bill passes the Senate, it will then be combined with the House bill and sent as ONE bill to the President for his signature in order for it to become law.

We were also successful in garnering an impressive eighty-six signatures on a letter initiated by Rep. Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA), urging President Obama to appoint a fair-minded **National Mediation Board (NMB)** as soon as possible. Only with the appointment of a worker-friendly NMB can we be assured an election free from undue influence and interference. In addition to the Roybal-Allard letter, we were also able to secure three individual letters written by Rep. Sander Levin (D-MI), Thaddeus McCotter (R-MI) and Rep. Ellen Tauscher (D-CA). All four letters were sent to the White House early this week and we are hopeful that the administration will act quickly to appoint a new National Mediation Board.

It was a great week for flight attendant issues and a great week for the AFA-CWA. Both of these accomplishments are a testament to the hard work and involvement of our members in their union on behalf of all flight attendants everywhere. It is also proof that our union works for all of us and a reason to ensure we maintain a voice in our workplace and our future at the new Delta.--Submitted by MEC Government Affairs Chair Albert Garcia

### **AFA-CWA TESTIFIES ON CAPITOL HILL FOR FAA REAUTHORIZATION BILL**

The International President of the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA (AFA-CWA), Patricia Friend, testified this week before the House Aviation Subcommittee to address issues involving the Federal

Aviation Administration (FAA) Reauthorization Bill. The FAA reauthorization is important because the bill determines how FAA programs are funded every three to four years.

One of the issues supported by AFA-CWA was in regard to flight attendants and OSHA. Since 1975, the FAA has refused to enforce OSHA standards for flight attendants even though flight attendants suffer injuries and illnesses working aboard commercial flights at rates several times higher than those for all other private industry workers. In 2000, AFA embarked on a grassroots campaign called OSHANOW! that resulted in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), between OSHA and the FAA to extend OSHA protections to Flight Attendants, but following the 2000 presidential election, nothing was done to implement the MOU despite AFA's on-going efforts during the last eight years. It is hoped that with a new administration, the FAA will now recognize the MOU.

Other issues supported by AFA-CWA in the FAA Reauthorization Bill include a "Return to the Cabin" Program, that will allow flight attendants an opportunity for rehabilitation after testing positive for drug or alcohol abuse, cabin air conditions, English language standards for flight attendants, the development of a method for assessing evacuation capability of aircraft under actual emergency conditions, and that Congress continue to prevent foreign control of U.S. airlines. To read more about how AFA-CWA outlines priority for the FAA Reauthorization Bill, please click [HERE](#).

### ***NEW MEC INTERIM APPOINTMENTS – NEW LOD COMMITTEE, SCHEDULING, UNIFORM***

During this week's meeting, the Master Executive Council recognized the needs of flight attendants who are part of the Language of Destination Program, and they established a new LOD committee to serve our growing LOD population. Detroit flight attendant Jeffrey Ferrer, has been selected to the newly appointed position of MEC LOD Committee Interim Chairperson.

Our current MEC Scheduling Vice-Chair Rebecca Collier has stepped down in order to focus more on her C3 duties and her leadership role in our joint campaign. In addition to her busy schedule in LEC 95, Council Representative Maggie Gray has graciously accepted to also serve as MEC Scheduling Interim Vice-Chairperson. Please join us in extending our appreciation and gratitude to Jeffrey and Maggie for their service to our membership and their dedication to our union.

The MEC has appointed Timothy Slope as the new Uniform Committee Chair. We thank outgoing Chair and LEC 97 President Kate Day for her hard work and efforts as she steps down as Chair. Kate will continue as MEC liaison to the Uniform Committee.

### ***MORE UNIFORM UPDATES***

Management has stated that the next and the last shipment of uniforms will be on February 15. They have urged flight attendants who have not received their uniforms by that date, to contact the local management team or call Lion Uniform group at 1-866-548-8438. By giving the Lion Uniform Group your Northwest employee number, they will be able to check the status of your order (e.g., still in production, been shipped, or not ordered.) *If they ask for your e-mail address, please consider providing them your NWA company e-mail.* If a flight attendant needs to return or exchange a uniform piece, he/she should call 1-800-921-1317 for a shipping tracking number that can be provided to the flight attendant by Lion Group. Any business expense form submitted in association with a return/exchange uniform item can be processed by your local management, who will forward the form to Minneapolis for reimbursement. If you are experiencing continued problems with returning items, reimbursement when there is no approved alteration vendor in your area, not receiving a pre-paid mailing label for returns, etc., please contact your local union officers so they can assist.

### **EARLY OUT MEDICAL BENEFITS**

222 NW flight attendants and somewhat fewer DL flight attendants have bid for the Early Out/55+ Program. Some of our members have inquired if there is a response from the President and CEO of Northwest Airlines, Edward Bastian, to a letter sent by NWA-AFA MEC President Kevin Griffin on January 22. Kevin's letter was another attempt to get something in writing from Delta management that would lock-in the fifty percent (50%) contractual subsidized retiree medical benefit as a guaranteed benefit under the Early Out Program. The enrollment deadline of February 11 has come and gone and we have yet to hear from our President and CEO on this matter. We believe that our flight attendants appreciate and deserve a response from Mr. Bastian. The on-going risk of leaving one's job during economic hard times without an enforceable "commitment" from Delta is daunting. We want to ensure that our members have a secure retirement, even if our joint group does not choose to vote for a union and contract in this merger.

### **A SALUTE TO THE COMPASSION OF OUR NORTHWEST COLLEAGUES**

*Taking Chance*, an HBO film that is premiering on February 21, is a personal account of Lieutenant Colonel Michael R. Strobl who in 2004, accompanied the remains of a fellow Marine killed in Iraq, Lance Corporal Chance Phelps, back to the fallen Marine's hometown. This story shows all the care and respect given to a service person's remains while transported to their final resting place. Lieutenant Colonel Strobl was inspired to document his experience because of the heartfelt reactions from ordinary Americans, whom he encountered throughout the process... "especially the airline employees... Northwest Airlines... they just went out of their way to make things as easy as possible for me and to extend their sympathy and gratitude to Chance's family" Lieutenant Colonel Strobl said during an interview with MSNBC's Chris Matthews. Lt. Col. Strobl never told anyone on the Northwest team why he was travelling, but somehow everyone knew his mission. Through it all, Northwest's employees showed extreme respect and honor while going above and beyond their call of duty. It is heartwarming to seeing our colleagues' compassion, encouragement, and gratitude in support of Strobl and the fallen Marine and his family. These employees make us all proud to be part of the Northwest family.

### **STRONGER UNIONS MAKE A STRONGER ECONOMY**

On his blog, Robert Reich, the 22<sup>nd</sup> Secretary of Labor and professor of economics at the University of California, Berkeley writes about why strong unions are so important to our economy and why we need the Employee Free Choice Act. Secretary Reich pointed out that during the 1950s and 1960s – when the American economy was possibly the strongest it has ever been - more than a third of all American workers had good paying union jobs. Good paying jobs allow consumers to purchase more goods and services which results in higher employment and a better economy. Now, less than eight percent of American workers are part of a union. As of early 2008, median income with head of household under the age of 65 fell below that of 2000. With a booming real estate market, the average American family borrowed against their homes in order to make up for the drop in pay. Once the housing market went bust, Americans' credit purchasing power went bust as well. Lower pay or no pay means less purchasing power which means fewer jobs.

He explains that in order to get out of the economic crisis we find ourselves mired in, we need higher wages and benefits to bring about more consumption that will help stimulate the economy. He notes that union wages average 30% higher than non-union wages, and also notes that polls show 57 million Americans want to be in a union, but have been prevented from forming unions by employers using threats and intimidation, and that even when employers were fined by the government for illegal tactics, the fines are usually so small as to be considered just a cost of doing business. Secretary Reich says the most important feature of the Employee Rights Act is that it will toughen penalties

against companies that violate workers' rights.

For Robert Reich's blog and to learn his point of view regarding how strong unions can help us get out of this current deep recession, please go to <http://robertreich.blogspot.com/2009/01/why-we-need-stronger-unions-and-how-to.html> or click [here](#).

### **WHATEVER HAPPENED TO PRO-STAN AND CISM?**

The previous Professional Standards Committee and Critical Incident Stress Management Team are all part of our AFA Employee Assistance Program (EAP). The mission of AFA EAP is to provide peer to peer assistance service. Each of our MEC EAP local Committees are staffed with volunteer flight attendant representatives who have been specially trained to deliver confidential peer support or provide a referral to a mental health professional in various personal and work-related areas. AFA EAP is strongly committed to the health, safety, and wellness of all of its members. EAP is a benefit provided by our union dues. To locate your local EAP representative, please go to [EAP Call List](#) posted on the [EAP Committee page](#) on the [MEC website](#).

### **DELTA LOD PROGRAM Q&A**

As the Company is looking to expand our language of destination program later this year with Greek and Italian, our colleagues at Delta also have an LOD program that consists of approximately 2200 flight attendant participants under twenty-one qualifying languages. A few frequently asked questions and answers regarding Delta's LOD program are as follows:

#### ***Q: Is it true that DAL has LOD in each cabin? How many per flight?***

*A: Up to this point, the goal has been, depending on the aircraft, to have one in each cabin if a dual aisle. The LOD Program has been undergoing a review since November of 2008. The findings will assist in deciding staffing levels in the future.*

#### ***Q: Are Delta LODs compensated for their language skills? If so, how much?***

*A: Currently the LOD position is compensated at \$1.35 per flight hour.*

#### ***Q: How are they tested?***

*A: The process to qualify consists of a telephone assessment/conversation.*

#### ***Q: Can a flight attendant be both LOD and PQ on the same flight?***

*A: The LOD cannot fill the role of Business Elite Flight Leader (a DL equivalent to Purser).*

#### ***Q: Are there any restrictions as to where LODs can or cannot work, such as an aisle or galley position?***

*A: The positions are indicated by service flow. The goal is to place LOD evenly throughout the cabin.*

For specific contractual rights under our contractual Northwest LOD program, please refer to [Letter 16](#) of our contract.

### **NWA-AFA MASTER EXECUTIVE COUNCIL SEEKS SECRETARY-TREASURER**

The MEC is currently seeking candidates to serve as its Secretary-Treasurer. The qualified candidate will review and maintain the monthly budget expenditures provided by the AFA International Office and assist the President in the administration of MEC funds. Additional duties include, but are not limited to: maintaining MEC records, keeping meeting minutes, monitoring membership rosters and seniority lists, maintaining files of Base monthly scheduling information, and

administrating MEC Committees.

If you are interested in being considered for MEC Secretary-Treasurer, please send a letter of interest with a resume to Karen Chapdelaine, Association of Flight Attendants, Master Executive Council, 8011 34th Avenue South, Suite 220, Bloomington, MN 55425, or email to [kchapdelaine@nwaafa.org](mailto:kchapdelaine@nwaafa.org). For a complete description of the duties of MEC Secretary-Treasurer, please refer to the [AFA-CWA Constitution and Bylaws Article VII, 2\(c\)](#) or go to the [Committees tab](#) on NWA-AFA website for the open job announcement. In order to allow more notice to our members and a larger window for applicants, the new deadline is March 20<sup>th</sup>. The appointment will take place at the MEC Meeting from March 28-30, preceding the AFA Board of Directors meeting.

### ***UNION SAFE BENEFITS ASSIST UNION MEMBERS***

Union Security, Assistance and Financial Education (Union SAFE) is a new one million dollar initiative from the AFL-CIO to assist union members facing economic hardship. New benefits include a Hospital Care Grant of \$1000 for members who have been hit with large unreimbursed hospital expenses, College Savings Grants of \$500 for members who open a new 529 tax-free college savings account, and job loss Grants of \$250 for Union PLUS credit card holders who have recently been laid-off for more than 90 days. To find out more about Union PLUS and the benefits offered, please click [HERE](#) or go to Member Tools under the *Resources Tab* on the [MEC website](#) and click the Union PLUS icon.