

American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations



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April 23, 2013

Mr. James C. Little, President
Transport Workers Union of America
501 3rd Street, NW, 9th Floor
Washington, DC 20001

Mr. Thomas Buffenbarger, President
International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers
9000 Machinists Place
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772-2675

Dear Presidents Little and Buffenbarger:

I want to address both the TWU and the IAM regarding my concerns about the impact that the merger between US Airways and American Airlines may have on your members, organized labor in general, and the AFL-CIO. I am concerned that the failure of two AFL-CIO unions to avoid winner-takes-all NMB merger/election procedures will result in lengthy, contentious and bitter campaigns to determine which of your two organizations represent various classes and crafts of employees (including the largest crafts of Mechanic and Related, and Fleet Service) at the post-merger carrier.

Already reports have reached me indicating that even months before the plan for the new American Airlines is approved by a Bankruptcy Court, developments are occurring which are generating an intensity of feelings on both sides that are generally experienced only in a representation fight. This intensity is, of course, being heightened by the fact that there are over 25,000 members at stake, with both unions at risk of losing representation rights that each has held for decades.

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Both of you know that if aggressive representation campaigns are launched, they will inevitably harm both unions. As important, it will also be taken for what it is: a portrait of AFL unions at war with one another at a time when we desperately need to focus organizing efforts on the unorganized. Spending large sums of money from your organizing budgets on combat which will not add a single unorganized worker to our ranks is truly counterproductive.

Thus, I am urging you to consider a more constructive approach, one in which both unions will share representation rights at the merged airline, with each union retaining its basic pre-merger membership. This approach seems to me the only one which will avoid either union feeling that it is being or has been raided and will generate the kind of harmony that we need for acting together in labor's best interest, and which will guarantee that labor's organizing dollars in the next year are not devoted to unions fighting one another.

We all know that, with the proper will, this alternative to a bitter election campaign can be achieved. I urge both of your organizations to work toward that end, and to do so as quickly as possible — it is certainly in both unions' interests, but I also know that it would be in the interests of the AFL-CIO and all of organized labor. Please let me know if I can be helpful to this effort.

Sincerely,


Richard L. Trumka
President

RLT/jhl

Cc: David Rosen
Joe Guerrieri