

# Historic Elections at Delta



## *Thousands ready to vote for IAM Representation*

The upcoming elections at Delta Air Lines are poised to make history as the largest union organizing victory in more than a half century, giving workers there a much-needed voice in an industry rocked by consolidation and uncertainty.

In October, the National Mediation Board (NMB), which conducts elections for airline and railroad workers, began the election process for 29,000 workers in Delta's merged Fleet Service, Stores and Passenger Service classifications.

The three groups include approximately 12,500 former Northwest Airlines (NWA) workers who hope to preserve the

guaranteed pay and pensions in their existing IAM contracts. The 16,500 workers at Delta are currently at-will employees without representation.

### **Secure Rights**

A win would secure bargaining rights for each of the combined groups and preserve the IAM-NWA contracts until a single agreement for each of the unified groups is negotiated and ratified. Fleet Service, Stores and Passenger Service would each negotiate their own agreement.

Like all airline employees, the workers at Delta and Northwest have been riding the airline industry roller coaster for

more than a decade.

Prior to announcing plans to merge in 2008, Northwest and Delta filed for bankruptcy on the same day in September 2005. Employees at both carriers saw widespread layoffs and radical restructuring that fell heavily on front-line employees.

During bankruptcy, Northwest wanted the right to outsource work at dozens of stations nationwide. The IAM fought back at the bargaining table and secured guaranteed jobs at 40 locations.

By contrast, Fleet Service workers at Delta had no representation during bankruptcy, and Delta unilaterally cut wages and benefits, outsourced jobs and froze employee pension plans.

The increasing use of vendors to perform everything from aircraft maintenance to passenger check-in represents the most significant threat to airline employment in decades.

"It is critical for workers to



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*From left, Delta Customer Service Agents Cynthia Jung, Mai Vang and Karin Fyhrlund are among 29,000 workers who will have the chance to vote for the benefits of IAM representation at the merged Northwest and Delta Air Lines.*

Ramp workers in Detroit show their "Union Strong" message. From left, Robert Janson, Courtney Smith, Delony Davis, Kirk Hammond, Edwin Murphey, Darryl Thompson, David Linden, Rajesh Taylor and William Bonnici.



have independent representation as airlines pursue their restructuring and cost-cutting goals," said Transportation General Vice President Robert Roach, Jr. "Carriers in the U.S. want to reduce the overall number of their own employees while dramatically increasing the use of vendors."

The level of U.S. airline employment in June 2010 was the second-lowest in 20 years, according to the U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics, while annual U.S. passenger traffic jumped almost 65 percent in the same period. The industry cut 54,000 jobs, or 16 percent of its workforce, in just the last two years.

New voting rules enacted by

the NMB will give workers at Delta a better chance than ever to win collective bargaining rights without having to overcome a decades-old practice of counting employees who do not vote as "no" votes.

"The IAM fought hard to win the same voting rights for air and rail workers that workers in every other industry have," said Roach. "The election at Delta will be a major step forward in the growth of workplace democracy. I urge every eligible employee to take part in this historic event."

An election win at Delta will preserve existing work rules,

including pay and pensions, while preventing any unilateral changes to workers' seniority rights, retiree health benefits and due process protections.

## Smooth Transition

Following a successful election, employees will set the priorities for a new collective bargaining agreement. A negotiated agreement would then be presented to workers for ratification. In keeping with the IAM's campaign pledge, new members will not pay union dues until after the agreement is ratified by a majority vote.

"We expect employees will see a smooth transition after the election," said Roach, who discounted the airline's anti-union campaign rhetoric. "The IAM and Delta both know what their obligations are under the law, and I'm confident we will work together."

*From left, Equipment Service Employee Al Lopez and Customer Service Agent Roxanne Leary demonstrate the solidarity among the Fleet Service and Passenger Service groups who will be voting in one of the largest organizing campaigns in airline history.*



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