

Delta Volunteers Hold the Key to Victory



Non-union employees at Delta Air Lines have a chance to win the benefits of a strong union contract. "In such an unstable industry, we need the solid foundation of a strong union," said Delta employee Greg Wynn of Atlanta.

Immediately after the 2008 announcement of a merger between Northwest Airlines and Delta Air Lines, the IAM began marshaling resources to preserve the union contracts for 12,500 Northwest employees and to extend union benefits to 16,000 Delta workers.

With elections drawing closer, Delta employees who volunteer to talk with their co-workers about the IAM advantage play a crucial role.

Under National Mediation Board rules, these "in-house" committee volunteers are able to speak freely with their co-workers during non-work periods in non-work areas.

Democratic Rights

Delta management has prohibited IAM representatives from addressing employees in the workplace about union representation and continues to largely segregate Northwest's IAM members at

Delta from the airline's non-union workforce.

The volunteers are able to provide Delta workers with information about their legal rights and give employees an opportunity to ask questions about the benefits of professional representation.

"Many Delta workers are afraid to speak with full-time IAM organizers for fear of losing their jobs," said Delta Atlanta Organizing Committee member Troy Bacon. "I understand that without a union, Delta has the right to fire anyone for any reason. But I refuse to be intimidated. I have a legal right to support a union, and there's too much at stake for me not to get involved."

That determination is shared by in-house volunteers nationwide.

"The in-house committees are the first step toward a more democratic workplace," said Salt Lake City Committee member Kerry Bevan. "After the representation election, we'll have the opportunity to vote for a contract, for shop stewards and our own grievance committee representatives. This election provides us the chance to determine our own destiny."



The National Mediation Board has proposed changes to representation election rules that will allow voters who actually cast a ballot to determine the outcome of the election, similar to every other union representation and public election in the United States.

NMB Proposes Election Rule Change

For more than 70 years, National Mediation Board (NMB) representation elections have had a unique rule that considered eligible voters who do not participate in air and rail union representation elections, for whatever reason, to have voted against unionization.

In October 2009, the NMB proposed to change their election rules to allow voters who actually cast a ballot to determine the outcome of the election, as is done in every other union representation and public election in the United States.

“Every employee should be able to choose for themselves whether to vote yes, no or to abstain in union elections,” said IAM Transportation General Vice President Robert Roach, Jr., in testimony at the NMB’s public hearing about the proposal.

During the National Mediation Board’s public comment period, IAM members sent in more than 24,000 messages supporting the NMB plan for fairer representation elections for workers covered by the Railway Labor Act.

“The government should not employ a process that assigns a viewpoint to voters who do not cast a ballot.”

IAM members and supporters also submitted more than 24,000 comments in favor of the rule change, although the NMB stopped counting at 20,000. Delta Air Lines, the only major airline to actively object to the proposal, persuaded only 500 of its 70,000 employees to oppose a fair election process.

“The Railway Labor Act was designed so that carriers would be neutral parties in the election process,” said Roach. “Today, carriers are no longer

neutral. The system is rigged against representation, and needs to be corrected.”

The NMB’s proposal garnered broad Congressional support. Nearly 180 Democratic and 13 Republican members of the House of Representatives and 36 U.S. Senators signed letters to the NMB in support of democratic voting rights for air and rail workers.

“After 70 years, the NMB’s voting process would be squarely in line with American ideals of democracy,” said Roach.

At press time, the NMB, was still considering the election rule proposal.

