

## Airline Pensions: The Good War

As the pension fight at bankrupt United Airlines lurched closer to a showdown with the potential for abrogated contracts and a nationwide strike, IAM negotiators learned they were not alone in their battle to protect 20,000 UAL Machinists.

Phone calls and emails from ordinary Americans, U.S. lawmakers and labor federations representing millions of members in Europe, Africa and Japan signaled help was on the way.

“The calls came from airline passengers, workers and union and nonunion retirees from all across the country, who understood we were on the front line of a very important battle,” said District 141 President Randy Canale. “Their voices would shake with emotion as they told us how outraged they were about what was happening to our members at United.”

At a Senate Finance Committee hearing on pensions, Transportation General Vice President Robert Roach, Jr. echoed that anger when he ridiculed the hypocrisy that allows corporations to walk away from billion-dollar obligations



*The fight for pensions at United Airlines grabbed national attention. District 141 President Randy Canale answers questions at a rally outside federal bankruptcy court in Chicago, IL.*

while receiving accolades from Wall Street.

“This greed-driven support for hurting American workers must stop,” declared Roach, who warned that Continental, Northwest Airlines and others want to

follow United’s example. “Funding relief is needed for airlines to avoid even more bankruptcies and pension terminations, but it must be done in a way that fosters benefit security for workers and retirees.”

### ***Amtrak Legends Win a Reprieve***

A valuable piece of American history was rescued recently when lawmakers in Washington bucked the wishes of GOP leaders and voted to restore funding for a brace of legendary Amtrak passenger train routes.

Saved from certain death were the City of New Orleans route between New Orleans and Chicago, the Empire Builder route across the Northern Plains and the

fabled Sunset Limited from Florida to Los Angeles.

The efforts by President Bush and wealthy advocates of a privatized rail system are likely to continue despite the vote by Congress to restore the funding needed to operate and maintain a long distance passenger rail system in the U.S. In his February budget, the President proposed eliminating Amtrak’s subsidy entirely.