

Machinists Welcome 2,400 America West Fleet Workers

Airline mergers frequently create turbulence for employees as the combined carrier attempts to integrate operations, cultures and workforces. The recent US Airways and America West merger produced an unusual benefit for 2,400 America West Fleet workers: a defined benefit pension plan that is the envy of the airline industry.

In addition to participation in the IAM National Pension Plan, the former America West workers will also see higher wages and improved benefits after transition negotiations with US

Airways bring all Fleet Service workers under a single agreement.

Bargaining Strength

“The creation of a single Fleet Service bargaining unit at the new US Airways with more than 8,000 IAM members will provide strength at the bargaining table that can improve the lives of each and every member,” said Transportation General Vice President Robert Roach, Jr.

The National Mediation Board certified the IAM as the representative for all US Airways Fleet Service workers

after the Transport Workers Union abandoned their bid to represent the combined workforce.

IAM Pension Plan

The NMB also extended the IAM’s certification for US Airways Maintenance Training Specialists to cover Maintenance Instructors from the former America West Airlines. These new members will also participate in the IAM National Pension Plan.

Full-time US Airways Fleet Service Workers currently earn \$78.30 for each year of future credited service in the secure, fully-funded IAM National Pension Plan. Maintenance Instructors earn \$148.66 for each year of future service. Part-time Fleet Service workers at US Airways are also eligible, earning \$53.12 for each year of service credit.

“We heard about IAM communication and education programs, the pension plan and the US Airways contract,” said Walt Norris, Las Vegas Fleet Service. “I was impressed with the membership’s turnout and the professionalism of everyone involved.”



IAM representatives met with America West Fleet Service workers at Sky Harbor Airport in Phoenix, AZ to answer questions about the merger of US Airways and America West. Local 2559 Recording Secretary Pamela St. Romain Kyle signs up new member Marion Rehberg.



Nearly 15,000 Ramp and Customer Service workers at Continental Airlines are organizing to win a secure pension instead of the under-funded retirement plan offered by the company.

Continental Campaign Aims for 15,000 New Members

Retirement planning is rarely the driving force behind a bid by airline employees to win collective bargaining rights, but 15,000 Fleet, Customer Service and Reservation employees at Continental Airlines have good reason to make it a high priority.

Their current retirement plan, administered by the airline, is deeply under-funded and able to pay less than 68 cents for every dollar owed to employees. Combined with the push by airlines to abandon so-called legacy costs of pensions and health

care, the need for a contract and professional representation has never been higher.

"Pensions are a key issue for Continental employees," said Transportation GVP Robert Roach, Jr. "Employees recently observed the IAM using its hard won experience to nail down a secure defined benefit pension plan for more than 8,000 Flight Attendants at Continental.

The Fleet and Customer Service and Reservation workers want the same kind of retirement security, too," said Roach.

Major Rail Negotiations Underway

The IAM is pushing forward in two major rail negotiations; at Amtrak and with the National Carriers' Conference Committee, which represents the nation's Class 1 freight rail carriers.

Negotiations for the 800 IAM members at Amtrak are continuing, more than six years after their contracts' amendable date. The IAM is negotiating jointly with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW). The Transportation Communications Union (TCU) has now joined the coalition.

Negotiations with Amtrak will resume in June, but annual funding battles with Congress makes Amtrak's future uncertain and hinders contract talks.

The same labor coalition, with the addition of the TWU, is also embroiled in negotiations for Class 1 freight rail workers, including 7,800 IAM members. Unlike the ailing airline industry, America's freight rail carriers are thriving.

"Freight rail carriers are enjoying astronomical profits. There is no excuse for workers not receiving their fair share," said Roach.



Negotiations are underway for more than 8,500 IAM members working on U.S. freight and passenger rail carriers.