

Success at United Launch Alliance

The Making of a Master Agreement



Few agreements are more difficult to achieve than a Master Agreement, an accord that covers union members working for the same employer but in different locations.

The Negotiating Committee for nearly 900 IAM members who work for United Launch Alliance (ULA) earned their place among those who successfully brokered a Master Agreement.

"This really was a remarkable achievement," said Aerospace Coordinator John Crowdis, who helped guide the 23-member

Left, IAM members at the United Launch Alliance build and launch an array of rockets for military and commercial applications.

committee. "We set aside individual agendas and bridged cultural and geographic differences that might otherwise be used to limit our bargaining power."

Before negotiations with ULA began in late 2008, the IAM Negotiating Committee took part in a unique Negotiations Preparations Class at the William W. Winpisinger Education Center, where they hammered out differences and created proposals that were ultimately accepted by the company and ratified by members in all five local lodges.

When the ULA, a joint rocket-building and launch venture of Boeing and Lockheed Martin was established in 2005, many of the pieces for a successful Master Agreement were already in place.

In California, members of

Members of the United Launch Alliance Negotiating Committee laid the foundation for a new Master Agreement during Negotiations Preparations training at the William Winpisinger Education Center. Some of the 23-member committee, from left, Mike Epperly, Local 2786; Phil Carr, Local 44; Jim Asel, Local 2786; Gavin Brunner, Local 44; Anthony Michael, Local 44 and Lou Vassoler, Local 1163.

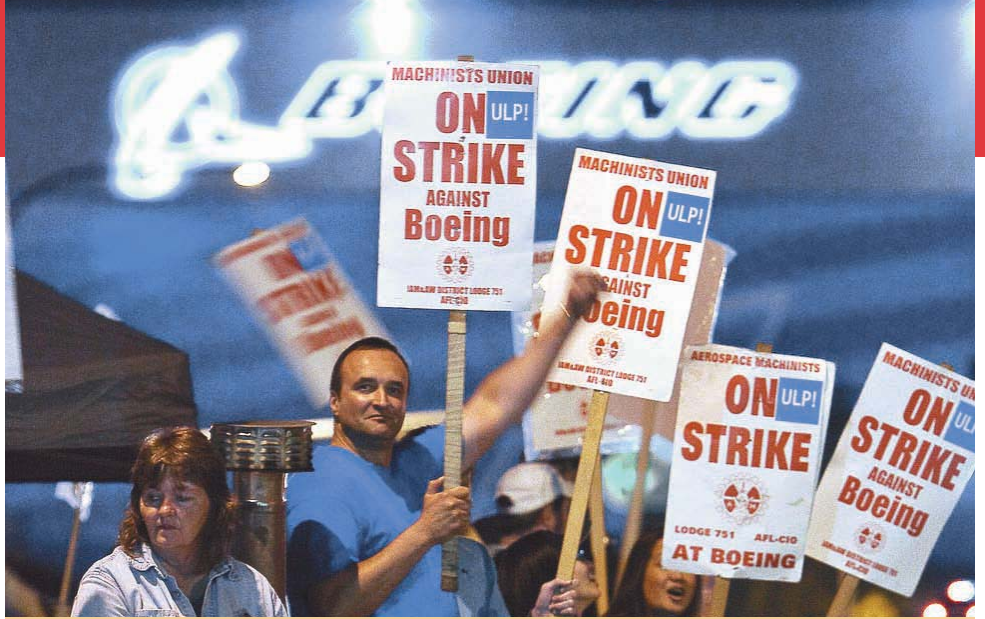


Local 2024 and 2786 maintain and launch Atlas and Delta rockets that were manufactured by members of Local 44 in Decatur, AL. In Cape Canaveral, FL, members of Local 610 and 1163 handled East coast launch duties for space vehicles, carrying everything from government reconnaissance probes to commercial satellites. While IAM members at each location continued to be covered by their individual contracts after Boeing and Lockheed joined forces, the need for uniform wages and work rules was apparent.

“It was one thing to make the case to members that they needed a unified voice, but it was quite another to convince the company that such a move could also be to their benefit,” said IAM Strategic Resources Research Economist Loren Almeroth, who assisted in the negotiations. Among the benefits of the new Master Agreement are annual wage increases of five percent, four percent and four percent.

The committee also negotiated annual COLA supplements, an \$80 pension multiplier, a \$3,000 lump sum ratification bonus and a common expiration date for all locations, allowing future bargaining committees to focus their combined strength, experience and resources.

“The union’s long-term goal throughout was parity in wages and benefits for members in all locations,” explained Crowdis. “This will be achieved in steps for some and in leaps for others, but the goal was always the same: to move forward as a unit.”



More than 27,000 IAM members at Boeing locations in Washington, Oregon, Kansas and California prevailed after 57 hard-fought days on the picket line.

Machinists Prevail at Boeing

After 57 days on the picket line, Machinists at the Boeing Company won a new contract last November that far exceeded the company’s “last and final” offer and assured all 27,000 members at Boeing a place of honor in the history of hard won union victories.

Members voted by a 74 percent margin to ratify a four-year agreement that covers Boeing facilities in Washington, Oregon, Kansas and California, and ended a strike that began on September 6, 2008.

“Our members at Boeing made extraordinary efforts to win a contract that shares the prosperity they help create at Boeing and ensures that the next generation of IAM members will also be able to share in that success,” said IAM President Tom Buffenbarger.

Among the issues that led

to the strike was Boeing’s attempt to eliminate thousands of IAM-represented positions by proposing contract terms that would expand the use of outside vendors in the workplace. In its initial proposal, Boeing also wanted to close the traditional pension plan to new hires and sharply cut health care benefits for retirees.

In addition to a 15 percent increase in wages, pension improvements and significant lump sum payments, IAM members’ share of medical costs will remain unchanged. Among the many job security gains in the new accord, the IAM won scope of work jurisdiction over previously unprotected bargaining unit work. More than 5,000 jobs at risk under the company’s initial proposal are protected under the new agreement.