



NEWS RELEASE

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NMB Offers Airline and Railroad Workers Hope for Fair Union Elections

WASHINGTON, DC – Airline and rail workers can have hope that fair union election rules are in their future, in light of sensible reforms proposed today by the National Mediation Board (NMB).

“The deck is currently stacked against airline and railroad workers,” said Edward Wytkind, President of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO (TTD), which requested the changes to NMB election procedures. “The NMB is proposing new rules that would finally permit airline and rail workers to vote for unions under the same standards found everywhere else in our system of democracy.”

The NMB’s proposed rule change advances a simple proposition: permit a majority of workers who actually vote to decide the election and stop assigning “no” votes to workers who do not participate.

“With this change, never again will workers in these industries seeking to form a union be thwarted by such un-democratic rules,” Wytkind said.

Just because a worker does not vote does not mean that he or she didn’t want a union – it just means the worker didn’t vote. The reason workers sit out union elections is often because of pressure from company management. The NMB’s current union election policy has become a magnet for voter suppression campaigns by employers – since they must only convince employees to abstain from voting in order to keep turnout below 50 percent.

“About nine out of 10 union elections in America feature an employer-mounted campaign against the union,” Wytkind said, citing preliminary findings from *A Changing Climate for Union Organizing at the Turn of the Millennium: RLA Data*. “The proposed rule eliminates the ‘veto by silence’ principle that has governed for too long and eliminates a voter turnout requirement that exceeds what is required in elections for the highest offices in our land.”

To put it in context, most mid-term elections in America do not involve majority participation. Records show that national turnout was below 50 percent in every mid-term election since 1930. Three former U.S. presidents and countless Senators, Governors and Representatives would not have been elected under the NMB’s voting standard.

The NMB has the authority and ability to make the change as proposed. The U.S. Supreme Court has affirmed that the NMB has broad discretion to determine how union elections will be conducted and that its current voting procedures are not required by law.

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“This NMB majority has demonstrated its commitment to fair union election procedures, Wytkind said. “Airline and rail workers are seeing their government take steps today to ensure that union elections are run under American norms and standards that have stood the test of time for more than 200 years.”

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The Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO, represents 32 member unions in the aviation, rail, transit, trucking, highway, longshore, maritime and related industries. For more information, visit www.ttd.org