

TTD NEWS RELEASE

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Transportation Unions Adopt 2011 Job Creation Agenda; Vow to Stop Repeal of Fair NMB Union Election Rules

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Protecting organizing and bargaining rights, dealing with the mounting national transit crisis and completing action on long overdue transportation jobs bills dominated the 2011 agenda adopted during the winter meeting of Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO.

“Transportation workers will make their voices heard in 2011 on the issues that impact their jobs, their safety and their rights,” said Edward Wytkind, president of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO (TTD). “We have advanced an ambitious agenda focused on making the transportation industry a place where hard working Americans can pursue meaningful careers and through collective bargaining, pursue the American Dream.”

Basic fairness and fundamentally democratic elections are on the line with a provision in the House aviation bill that repeals union election rules issued just last year by the National Mediation Board (NMB). TTD’s Executive Committee vowed to oppose an FAA bill that includes the NMB rule repeal adding, “failure to remove it not only threatens the rights of aviation and rail workers, but jeopardizes timely completion of an aviation bill” that will create 300,000 jobs and make air travel safer.

“Thanks to the reform NMB rules a majority of workers who participate in a union election decide the outcome, because non-participation is no longer tallied as a vote against the union,” Wytkind said. “Supporting repeal of these rules means you support automatically assigning a NO vote to employees that sit out an election. Most House Members wouldn’t get elected if the same rules applied to them.”

In response to the mounting crisis facing the almost 9 out of 10 mass transit agencies that are cutting service, raising fares or slashing jobs at a time of growing demand, the Executive Committee endorsed a reform package that permits portions of federal capital dollars to be used to avert service cuts. The reforms would permit operating assistance flexibility based on a dual action trigger tied to jobless rates and gas prices.

“This transit crisis is threatening reliable and affordable public transportation for millions of Americans in cities of all sizes,” Wytkind said. “New buses parked in garages don’t do anyone any good if there aren’t any drivers to operate them or mechanics to maintain them. The severe downsizing of transit we are seeing – as high as 50 percent in some cities – threatens working people across America and businesses that rely on these transportation services, and promises to cause even more congestion on our highways.”

Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO

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Edward Wytkind, President / Larry I. Willis, Secretary-Treasurer

Overdue transportation reauthorization bills – engines of job growth – cannot be delayed any further. The aviation bill, estimated to create 300,000 jobs and support the jobs of millions of aviation industry related employees, “must honor worker rights, improve safety and invest in a modern 21st century aviation system,” TTD’s Executive Committee said. The Executive Committee also endorsed the President’s \$556 Billion budget for the surface transportation reauthorization, urging Congress and the President to find a way to pay for it with higher gas user fees and mechanisms that would make Wall Street and Big Oil pay their “fair share.”

“With more than 14 million still out of work, Americans are counting on this Congress to support policies that create jobs and fix the economy,” Wytkind said. “Those who propose reckless cuts to vital transportation investment programs as a way to score political points in the budget deficit debate will fail to deliver what America needs most: jobs.”

Amtrak must play “a central role in delivering on the promise of high speed rail,” the Executive Committee said. Praising President Obama for his recommended “infusion of billions more in support of Amtrak,” transportation unions said now is the time to fully fund Amtrak in 2012 at the authorized level of \$2.2 billion and reject already discredited proposals to break-up and privatize Amtrak.

“If our political leaders seize this opportunity, this could be the era for Amtrak and its skilled employees to deliver on the promise of higher speed train service on several corridors across America,” Wytkind said.

The Executive Committee also boosted its effort to revive and expand the U.S. port and maritime industry, which suffers from a combination of ideological attacks on the maritime laws, damaging budget cuts, inadequate port investments, and inconsistent enforcement of cargo preference requirements. Transportation unions rejected hollow attacks on the Jones Act during and following the BP oil spill clean-up, as deliberate attempts to “demonize unions ... to the benefit of foreign shipping interests.”

“We will be pushing an agenda to create and protect good port and maritime jobs,” Wytkind said. “These politically motivated attacks directed at essential U.S. federal maritime policies must be turned back.”

The Executive Committee also vowed to promote solutions to two vital air safety issues: criminalizing the growing trend of lasers being shined at aircraft on approaches and the need to regulate the shipment of lithium batteries in air commerce as dangerous goods.

“These common sense reforms will make airline employees and passengers safer from the severe hazards of blinding lasers and poorly regulated lithium batteries in flight,” Wytkind said. “The Administration and Congress have an opportunity to enhance air safety.”

For more information on all of transportation labor’s priority issues discussed yesterday, please visit the TTD website for a complete list of approved policy statements.

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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.