

Our Voice on Capitol Hill

Northwest Airlines Master Executive Council Government Affairs Committee

Association of Flight Attendants – CWA, AFL-CIO

September, 2009 – *Third Quarter Report*

FMLA:

As you all are aware we were very close to passing the Flight Crew FMLA Technical Corrections Act just prior to the Congressional August recess, but an un-named Republican Senator placed a hold on the bill delaying its passage. To date we do not know who the Senator was that placed the hold. At any rate we have continued to garner support for the bill during the recess and most notably, Sen. Al Franken of MN signed on recently. Much thanks to Camilla Wolkerstorfer, MSP Chair and Rene Foss, NYC Chair who spoke to Franken's office and presented our argument in favor of the bill.

We currently have 19 cosponsors on S. 1422 not including Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA) who introduced the bill.

Sen Webb, Jim [VA] - 7/9/2009

Sen Dodd, Christopher J. [CT] - 7/9/2009

Sen Murkowski, Lisa [AK] - 7/9/2009

Sen Collins, Susan M. [ME] - 7/9/2009

Sen Bond, Christopher S. [MO] - 7/9/2009

Sen Cantwell, Maria [WA] - 7/21/2009

Sen Schumer, Charles E. [NY] - 7/21/2009

Sen Feingold, Russell D. [WI] - 7/21/2009

Sen Akaka, Daniel K. [HI] - 7/30/2009

Sen Begich, Mark [AK] - 8/3/2009

Sen Burr, Richard [NC] - 8/3/2009

Sen Mikulski, Barbara A. [MD] - 8/5/2009

Sen Cardin, Benjamin L. [MD] - 8/5/2009

Sen Grassley, Chuck [IA] - 8/7/2009

Sen Snowe, Olympia J. [ME] – 9/8/2009

Sen Gillibrand, Kirsten E. [NY] - 9/8/2009

Sen Hagan, Kay [NC] - 9/9/2009

Sen Franken, Al [MN] - 9/9/2009

Sen Menendez, Robert [NJ] – 9/16/2009

There are a number of Senators such as Dianne Feinstein (CA), Mark Warner (VA), Mark Udall (CO), Michael Bennet (CO), Arlen Specter (PA), Joe Lieberman (CT), Frank Lautenberg (NJ), George Voinovich (OH), Evan Bayh (IN), Debbie Stabenow (MI), Carl Levin (MI), Bill Nelson (FL), John Ensign (NV), Ron Wyden (OR) and Daniel Inouye (HI) who are NOT on the bill. These Senators are from States where we have many Flight Attendants. I urge the Chairs in these bases to begin a grass roots effort to generate some noise in these Senate offices.

Please make sure you are contacting the legislative assistant in the offices who handles this issue, in the offices you contact. Urge them to bring the bill to the Senator's attention. Once you have made contact with those offices please let me know whom you spoke to or left a message with. If you are asked for additional information, we can provide that also.

Congress was in recess, but not your Government Affairs Committee:

U.S. lawmakers returned to Capitol Hill this week, after spending several weeks at home for their summer District Work Period. During this summer recess, several Government Affairs Committee members (and AFA activists) met with members of Congress in California, Minnesota and New York. Throughout August, committee members and volunteers continued grassroots activities on our efforts to ban cell phones in-flight, set carry-on baggage standards and provide crewmembers with equal access to the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA). For the most part our focus was on the carry-on baggage bill HR2870 introduced by Rep. Dan Lipinsky (D-IL). To date this bill only has 5 co-sponsors. We are in the process of following up with the offices we met with during the recess to ask if they have had an opportunity to consider sponsoring this very important bill.

Now back in session, both the House and the Senate will be focused on health care reform and passing numerous appropriations bills before adjourning the first session of the 111th Congress. Senate floor time will be at a premium so we will need to build our cosponsor list for FMLA and other issues very quickly. With less than two months remaining before an October 30 target adjournment date, we have our work cut out for us.

FAA Re-Authorization:

As you know, AFA has been working to address a number of our legislative goals in the FAA Reauthorization legislation. The House version of FAA Reauthorization, H.R. 915, passed in the House by a vote of 277-136 on May 21. The bill included an in-flight cell phone ban, Flight Attendant fatigue study provisions, OSHA-like workplace safety and health protections, notification of pesticide application on flights, cabin air quality provisions, cabin temperature standards, HIMS program to include Flight Attendants, mandatory inspections of foreign repair stations, further definition of provisions restricting foreign control of US airlines and antitrust review of airline alliances.

The Senate version of FAA Reauthorization was approved by a voice vote in the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee on July 21. The legislation has not yet been placed on the Senate calendar for floor debate and vote. The Senate Commerce Committee approved legislation contained several AFA backed provisions. These included expansion of the HIMS program to cover Flight Attendants, a requirement that Flight Attendants be proficient in English, alcohol awareness training for Flight Attendants and gate agents, a mandate that the FAA research and identify aircraft sensor and air cleaning technology, provisions for Flight Attendant fatigue research, and OSHA-like workplace safety and health protections for Flight Attendants.

The Air Line Pilots Association (ALPA) also has several proposals included in the FAA Reauthorization. These include improved runway safety measures, requirements for a final rule on pilot fatigue, improved runway safety measures, wake vortex mitigations and in-flight weather hazard detection systems, a study on fortified cockpit doors for all cargo-aircraft, and a prohibition on tail-end ferry flights as it relates to daily flight time/duty time limits.

The FAA has been operating under a series of congressionally approved extensions since September 2007, when the last FAA Reauthorization bill expired. The Senate was unable to conclude their work on FAA Reauthorization during the 110th Congress.

National Mediation Board Representational Elections:

The Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO (TTD) has written to the National Mediation Board (NMB) asking the NMB to amend its Representation Manual so NMB-conducted elections are carried out in a "fair and just manner."

Specifically, TTD is requesting a change to the absolute majority requirement, where 50% plus 1 of eligible voters must participate in the election. This peculiar NMB practice is not required under the Railway Labor Act nor is an absolute majority requirement necessary under National Labor Relations Act-conducted representational elections. We are hopeful that this change will occur in time for our representational election.

Minnesota Unemployment:

Council 95 (MSP) has received reports of some of our members on SLIP leaves that are being denied unemployment benefits. As you know your Government Affairs Committee was successful in changing a MN state statute that disqualified our members taking voluntary leaves in lieu of involuntary furloughs. We are researching these reports and will follow-through with the AFA-CWA legal department if necessary to find why these members are being denied.

State Issues:

SB186 – Was presented to the California legislature by Senator De Saulnier. The purpose of this bill is to delete the December 31, 2009 sunset date that will, after that date, eliminate the right of workers in California to pre-designate a personal physician for the purposes of workers compensation. The bill, which passed both, the state Assembly and the state Senate was presented to Governor Schwarzenegger on September 11, 2009. According to California law the governor has three choices, 1. He can sign in into law, 2. He can veto it or 3. He can do nothing, which will automatically make the bill law. At present we are asking all California based flight attendants to contact the governor's office at <http://gov.ca.gov/interact> urging him to sin SB186 into law.

FLIGHTPAC

The continued support of our Membership, through participating in our grassroots campaigns and supporting FlightPAC, is essential in ensuring our voice is heard in Washington. FlightPAC is the best tool we have to elect and re-elect members of Congress who will stand up and fight for our issues. If you need FlightPAC brochures or other fundraising materials for your local meetings, please contact Steve Schembs, AFA Government Affairs Department ext. 568.

Respectfully,

Albert Garcia
Government Affairs Chair
NWA Master Executive Council

Cc: Base Chairs
MEC Officers
Local Presidents
Members – Bulletin Boards and Webpage