

May 1, 2006

The Honorable Marion C. Blakey
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
Federal Building 10A
800 Independence Avenue, SW, Room 1010
Washington, DC 20591

Dear Administrator Blakey:

I read with great interest your recent remarks to the American Association of Airport Executives (AAAE), especially your characterization of the FAA-NATCA bargaining issues. Let me offer a few observations and fill in a few blanks since your remarks omitted some key facts.

First, it is unfair and highly unproductive for you to come before airport executives and attempt to pit airports against your hard working controllers. Anyone involved in this industry knows that cooperation, not divisiveness, will get us through the current aviation system capacity, modernization and staffing shortage challenges.

Second, it is counterproductive and inspires more acrimony between your agency and your employees for you and your management team to continue to so bluntly lay blame for the severe FAA budget shortcomings on air traffic controllers. You might consider pushing your own Administration to stop slashing so many vital aviation programs in the Federal budget.

Third, as you update your various audiences on the state of FAA-NATCA negotiations, at a minimum you should inform them that NATCA began negotiations demanding moderate wage increases and has now put on the table \$1.4 billion in cost savings and concessions. Meanwhile, the FAA demanded \$2 billion in concessions last summer and today is still demanding \$2 billion in cost savings. That is not how collective bargaining is supposed to work.

Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO

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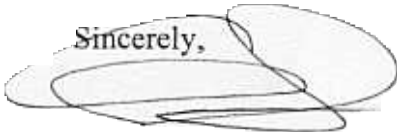
Fourth, you mentioned in your remarks that your stakeholders say, “You need to operate more like a business.” Perhaps you might explain to your stakeholders (which, by the way, include aviation employees and their unions) how sending your last contract proposal to Congress, writing the dissenting views of the union without its input, and implementing the contract unilaterally in 60 days without any employee participation moves your agency in the direction of operating more like a business. What private business in America gets to send its contractual disputes to Congress and simply implement new terms and conditions unilaterally? I suspect the FAA’s vendors wouldn’t put up with such distasteful treatment – why should the FAA’s employees?

It is time for the FAA to end the hyperbolic rhetoric, pull back its impasse submission currently before Congress and return to the bargaining table. Collective bargaining only works when both sides negotiate fairly and reasonably. The strategy being deployed by the FAA is neither fair nor reasonable.

I urge you to heed the bipartisan calls in Congress – including a significant majority of the U.S. House of Representatives – and resolve this impasse at the bargaining table. As Senator Olympia Snowe recently said, “politicizing negotiations” places at risk the chance of reaching a reasonable settlement.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Edward Wytkind", written over a light blue oval-shaped background.

Edward Wytkind
President