



NEWS RELEASE

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Greater Fairness Comes to Airline and Rail Union Elections

WASHINGTON, DC – Transportation unions applaud the announcement today by the National Mediation Board (NMB) that it has amended union election procedures in the airline and rail industry to make them fairer and more consistent with democratic norms.

“In too many instances, airline and rail workers were denied the ability to bargain collectively because of arcane election rules that were more onerous than those used in the elections of Governors or members of Congress,” said Edward Wytkind, president of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO (TTD).

The new rules replace old procedures that required a majority of workers to vote just to validate a union election. Any worker that didn’t participate in an election was tallied as a “no” vote – a procedure found nowhere else in American democracy. The old rules also encouraged a climate of voter suppression, because companies could prevent unions from forming by encouraging workers to simply sit out the election.

“Workers should be able to vote for a union in a system that isn’t rigged to arbitrarily assign meaning to votes that weren’t cast,” Wytkind said. “With the change announced today, union elections in the airline and rail industries stand a real chance of reflecting the true will of the employees that vote.”

The proposed rule change received widespread support, with 39 Senators, 179 Democratic House Members and 13 Republican House Members having written letters of support. In addition, the Center for American Progress, American Rights at Work, national, state and local unions, and numerous political scientists and labor professors offered their support.

“Until today, veto by silence was the rule of the day. With this change, only workers who cast a vote will be counted,” Wytkind said. “The Transportation Trades Department commends the NMB for this important reform, which ensures greater fairness in union elections for airline and rail workers across the country.”

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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

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