



May 19, 2008

Support the Airline Flight Crew Technical Corrections Act

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO (TTD), I urge you to vote in favor of the Airline Flight Crew Technical Corrections Act (H.R. 2744) when it is considered by the House under suspension of the rules. This common sense measure will ensure that flight attendants and pilots are covered under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA).

The intent of FMLA was to provide up to 12 weeks unpaid leave to an employee if he or she had worked 60 percent of a full-time schedule, approximately 1,250 hours, over the previous 12 months. While 1,250 hours reflects 60 percent of a full-time schedule for most nine to five workers, this hourly requirement does not translate properly for flight attendants and pilots.

Due to unusual time keeping methods in the airline industry, flight crews find it difficult to meet the 1,250 hour threshold required for FMLA eligibility. They only receive credit for time spent "in flight," although they can spend several days a week away from home due to the nature of their work. Time between flights, such as layovers and overnight stays, does not count toward FMLA qualification. In fact, pilots' flight time is capped at 1,000 hours per year, making it virtually impossible for them to qualify for FMLA coverage. This outcome doesn't reflect the original intent of the law.

During consideration and debate of FMLA, sponsors of the bill expressed the view that flight crews would be covered by the Act. Former Representative William Clay stated on the House floor that, "We certainly do not intend that dedicated workers in unique circumstances should be excluded from the bill's protection simply because of their industry's unusual time keeping methods. Flight attendants and pilots who work the number of hours constituting half time employment [later increased to 60 percent] during the previous 12 months as defined by their collective bargaining agreement or by industry standard, are fully entitled to family and medical leave under this bill."

In March, TTD's Executive Committee unanimously adopted a policy statement endorsing the Airline Flight Crew Technical Corrections Act and called on Congress to quickly pass this important legislation. There is simply no reason why airline flight crew members should continue to be excluded from FMLA coverage, and I urge you to support H.R. 2744 to finally address this problem. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact me or Mia Clarkson at 202/628-9262.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Edward Wytkind", is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Edward Wytkind
President

Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO

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