



April 25, 2006

Dear Senator:

The current process for settling collective bargaining disputes between the FAA and its workers is unfair and Congress must step in to ensure an equitable and balanced process that promotes the safety and efficiency of our nation's aviation system. On behalf of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO (TTD), I urge you to co-sponsor and work to pass S. 2201, the Fair Labor Management Dispute Resolution Act as soon as possible. I also encourage you to intervene with the FAA and urge the agency to return to the negotiating table with its air traffic controllers.

As you are likely aware, on April 5 the FAA walked away from the negotiating table with the National Air Traffic Controllers Association (NATCA) and sent its contract proposal to Congress. If Congress does nothing within 60 days, the FAA has taken the position it can and will unilaterally impose the contract with no further input from the union or its workers. A process that allows management to decide unilaterally what is in a collective bargaining agreement is not true bargaining and has resulted, not surprisingly, in a one-sided proposal that basically mirrors the FAA's original position. Using Congress as a shield to impose a contract is neither fair nor in the best, long-term interest of our aviation system.

We have always believed that collective bargaining is best conducted at the negotiating table and not politicized in the halls of Congress. In fact, last week, the President of NATCA formally asked the FAA to return to the bargaining table and once again expressed his hope that a voluntary agreement between the parties could be reached. We echo these sentiments and hope that the FAA will heed this call.

Congress likewise must encourage the FAA to pull back its impasse submission and bargain in good faith as the law clearly requires. In addition, Congress must pass S. 2201 – introduced by Senator Barack Obama – providing for binding arbitration if there is a true impasse (rather than allowing the agency to impose its “last, best offer”). We urge you to add your name to this important legislation and work to get legislation enacted to fix this inequity as soon as possible.

It must be remembered that if the FAA is allowed to ignore its bargaining obligations today, this problem will not go away. Other FAA workers represented by the Professional Airways Systems Specialists (PASS), the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) and other units of NATCA are in various stages of bargaining. A system that creates this level of acrimony is neither sustainable nor consistent with the goals of managing the world's safest air traffic control system.

For the federal workers who are entrusted with ensuring the safety of the flying public, the right to a fair bargaining process should not be too much to ask. I urge you to stand behind these workers and demand a fair process on contract negotiations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Edward Wytkind", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Edward Wytkind
President

Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO

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