

TTD NEWS RELEASE

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Transportation Unions Call for Go-Slow Approach in Open Skies Aviation Talks with China

WASHINGTON, DC – Leaders of 32 transportation unions, meeting today to discuss their agenda for the coming months, urged the Obama Administration to proceed with great care in negotiations with China on a new aviation trade, or “open skies,” agreement.

“The U.S.-China aviation talks are anything but a routine matter of international trade,” said Edward Wytkind, president of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO. “We believe these negotiations should pause and the Administration should ensure that any expanded aviation trade agreement with China protects the rights and jobs of U.S. aviation workers.”

From China’s currency manipulation, to that nation’s failure to uphold basic labor and employment standards, to the fact that the airlines of China are state-controlled, there are a number of issues the Administration must consider and better understand before it advances talks with China.

The TTD Executive Committee recommended a series of steps that should be taken by our government prior to advancing talks with China. These include:

Studying the impact of a U.S.-China open skies agreement on U.S. aviation employees.

This study must examine how an expanded aviation trade relationship with China – including any immunized alliances between U.S. and Chinese airlines that stem from an agreement – would affect U.S. aviation jobs. The study should also examine the issue of outsourcing key airline functions including aircraft maintenance in the context of a U.S.-China accord.

Developing a Labor Article that establishes strong, enforceable labor standards.

The article would need to state that the two sides recognize that the rights and jobs of workers are protected, that aviation employees should benefit from the agreement, and require both countries to abide by International Labor Organization standards and accompanying jurisprudence.

Protecting U.S. airline jobs in any revenue-sharing arrangements or ventures.

In any revenue-sharing arrangements between U.S. and Chinese carriers under an

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open skies agreement, U.S. airlines and their employees must perform a substantial portion of work corresponding to the revenues they derive. In other words, we must prohibit joint ventures where all of the jobs get outsourced because the foreign carrier does all of the flying.

“Given what we know about China’s aviation industry and its general approach to trade relations with the United States and other nations, it’s hard to see how revenue-sharing alliances would benefit our members,” Wytkind said. “More broadly, while we support market-opening trade initiatives that promote and expand U.S. aviation jobs, we believe our aviation trade relationship with China should be managed with caution. We look forward to working with this Administration which has demonstrated that it wants to expand trade in a way that benefits American workers.”

TTD’s Executive Committee approved a full policy statement on this issue, which can be accessed on its website.

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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.