



NEWS RELEASE

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Administration Tentative Approval of Virgin America Application Clear Attempt to Silence Major Critic of US-EU Aviation Pact

Washington, D.C. – *Yesterday, the Department of Transportation preliminarily approved Virgin America's application to begin operations in the United States. Edward Wytkind, President of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO, issued the following statement:*

"Make no mistake, Virgin America is Richard Branson's airline.

"What is clear is that Virgin America has become a very important bargaining chip that the Bush Administration is cashing in. It is no secret that Mr. Branson is a leading opponent of the tentative air transport agreement between the United States and the European Union.

"With the EU's approval of the deal still in question and the EU ministers' meeting 48 hours away, Mr. Branson's application to start what is being billed as a 'U.S. airline' has suddenly received tentative approval. This is a blatant quid pro quo that this Administration hopes will silence one of the agreement's most prominent critics and secure a ratified agreement with the EU. It also appears to us that the Bush Administration is using the Virgin America application to demonstrate its willingness to bend the ownership and control limitations as it promises to do in the tentative U.S.-EU agreement.

"You can dress up a foreign airline by putting America in its name and giving it domestic advisors and stockholders, but that doesn't change the fact that Virgin America will always be Mr. Branson's airline. Foreign ownership and control rules have served workers and our nation well and should not be discarded simply to buy-off the EU."

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TTD 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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