



A bold voice for transportation workers

June 9, 2014

Support Airline Workers and Fair Competition: Vote YES on Westmoreland-DeFazio

Dear Representative:

As you consider amendments to the FY 2015 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development Appropriations Act (H.R. 4745), I urge you to vote YES on the Westmoreland-DeFazio Amendment. This amendment will ensure that the U.S.-EU Open Skies Agreement is implemented in full accordance with U.S. law and the agreed-upon provisions in the agreement.

The U.S.-EU Air Transport, or “Open Skies” Agreement was intended to open up competition in the transatlantic aviation marketplace while also promoting strong safety, labor and working condition standards, and ensuring a level playing field for U.S. airlines and their workers. This agreement contained, for the first time ever, a labor article (Article 17 bis) designed to prevent airlines from exploiting this agreement to undermine workers and labor rights, stating that “the opportunities created by the Agreement are not intended to undermine labour standards or the labour-related rights and principles contained in the Parties’ respective laws.”

Despite the inclusion of this article and the clear intent of the negotiators, Norwegian Air International (NAI) is attempting to gain access to the U.S. aviation market using a flag of convenience model that directly undermines workers and airlines on both sides of the Atlantic. The airline is registered in Ireland, even though it will not service Irish airports, and has chosen this path to avoid Norway’s labor and tax laws. It will contract – or more accurately “rent” – much of its flight crew from Thailand using a recruitment firm based in Singapore. In doing so, NAI will be able to undercut U.S. airlines and their employees by as much as 50 percent. This is the exact scenario that Article 17 bis was intended to prevent.

The Westmoreland-DeFazio amendment would simply require the Department of Transportation (DOT) to follow U.S. law and the terms of the Open Skies agreement when considering applications for a foreign air carrier permit. NAI’s application clearly fails on both accounts. This amendment will send the message that the U.S. will not tolerate those who wish to take advantage of our international agreements to undermine labor standards and distort the competitive balance of the transatlantic marketplace.

Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO

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Edward Wytkind, President / Larry I. Willis, Secretary-Treasurer



NAI and its team of corporate lobbyists are claiming that they are being unfairly targeted and frozen out of the lucrative U.S. market by those who wish to stymie competition. This argument rings hollow. We support open competition. We will not, however, stand idly by as one rogue airline seeks to undermine fair competition by scouring the globe for the cheapest labor and weakest regulations. Those who comply with those laws and follow the rules have nothing to fear from this amendment. That NAI so vehemently opposes an amendment that simply reinforces existing law and the terms of the open skies agreement speaks volumes about their true motives and the nature of their operating scheme.

I urge you to stand up for fair competition and workers' rights. I urge you vote YES on Westmoreland-DeFazio.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Edward Wytkind". The signature is fluid and somewhat abstract, with several loops and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Edward Wytkind
President