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Delta Flight Attendants Denied Right to Fair Election

The National Mediation Board (NMB) issued a decision on November 18, 2011, denying charges of management interference in the November 2010 union representation election at Delta Air Lines. AFA strongly condemns the decision, a year in the making, which threw out 60 years of contract bargaining and discounted the voices of nearly ten thousand Delta Flight Attendants who stood up to vote for AFA in the face of serious management interference.

This ruling cannot break the ties that unite us. As long as management knows Flight Attendants at Delta want AFA, some of management’s worst plans will remain at bay – there is a measure of protection. AFA’s first objective is to unite all cabin crewmembers.

Every Flight Attendant with membership in AFA benefits as we build our voice in the work place. Without a union and a contract there are no guarantees – management controls our employment. And, while one group of Flight Attendants remains unrepresented management will continue to use that against us at the bargaining table where Flight Attendants are represented. There are tangible reasons why we all need to unite and take ownership of our future.

If you know any Delta Flight Attendants, please show them your support. We are all Flight Attendants. Visit yourAFA.org for more information.

On the cover: Mesaba Airlines Flight Attendant Mary Cole displays her AFA pin and a pink ribbon as part of the Mesaba AFA MEC ‘Think Pink’ fund raiser for breast cancer research. Participants wore a pink ribbon on their uniforms during the month of October to raise funds for the Breast Cancer Research Foundation.
Working Together to Meet Challenges, Get Results

Your new team of AFA International officers began the year with significant challenges ahead for our union. We are proud to report that we met those challenges with success, as you will see in this 2011 year-in-review issue of Flightlog. With consensus-based leadership, we have worked diligently to advance the Flight Attendant profession. The real story of AFA’s victories in the past year is in the mobilized grassroots membership — the AFA activists and volunteers, and your elected local Flight Attendant leaders, who made every success by standing together.

This year, we warmly welcome the Continental and Continental Micronesia Flight Attendants, who voted with United Airlines Flight Attendants for AFA representation following the merger of their airlines. We are also proud to welcome our newest members at Omni Air International. And, we are pleased that the Frontier Flight Attendants ratified their first-ever contract earlier this year.

This was also a year for remembering and honoring our own. We honored our heroes as we marked ten years since the tragic events of September 11, 2001. We renewed our commitment to never forget our flying partners who lost their lives on a day that transformed our profession, our industry and our world forever. Upon taking office, we pledged to highlight our most important role by gaining recognition of Flight Attendants as first responders. AFA’s message that Flight Attendants are first responders and safety professionals reached far and wide, as you will read in the pages that follow.

In an era of mergers, acquisitions and an endless rebranding of our airlines, our unity and purpose to defend and advance our careers remains constant. We are energized as we continue moving forward to meet the challenges of 2012 and gain positive results for Flight Attendants. We are on the cusp of a popular political awakening that embraces labor’s core values of fairness, equality and justice. Together, as a strong voice for change, we will realize our vision for a better future for Flight Attendants and for workers everywhere. 

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Victory! Capping an organizing drive by enthusiastic Flight Attendants ready for representation in the Flight Attendant union, on October 25, 2011, Omni Air International Flight Attendants voted to join AFA. Omni Air operates international and domestic passenger charters, as well as cargo and troop airlift for the US military.

The campaign illustrated the power of face-to-face discussions. The Omni AFA activists never allowed management’s attacks to derail their vision of why they want a union and the right to define their future. Instead, they wove a network of support with one-on-one organizing, ultimately turning out 80 percent of the eligible voters. And, those Flight Attendants elected AFA with a decisive 84 percent of the vote.

Within seconds of the announcement, the victory news went worldwide, with postings on the Omni AFA Facebook page from Flight Attendants in countries around the world including Morocco, Italy, Ireland and Kuwait, and across the United States. Interim President Mya Grap, and Ken Heare, Interim Secretary, immediately began engaging their peers in building the AFA structure at Omni Air International. Over 400 Omni Flight Attendants now have a voice at work and the ability to advance their careers with AFA. The Omni Flight Attendants have already created the engaged AFA mobilization structure that is needed to win a strong first contract.
Frontier Flight Attendants Ratify First Collective Bargaining Agreement

Frontier Flight Attendants, who recently joined AFA, ratified their first collective bargaining agreement in August 2011. The AFA Frontier Negotiating Committee took a creative approach and, in collaboration with management, negotiated a first agreement with long-term value and immediate work rules, benefits and job protections for the nearly 1,000 Frontier Flight Attendants.

At Press Time …

The National Mediation Board (NMB) unexpectedly decided that Frontier is part of a single transportation system with all of the airlines held by Republic Airways Holdings, Inc. — Chautauqua, Shuttle America, and Republic Airlines — for purposes of Flight Attendant representation. AFA began working with the Teamsters to navigate a path of unity for the Frontier and Republic Flight Attendants. Together, the unions have asked the NMB to postpone the election process while we work out a joint representation agreement that maintains current representation for each respective group of Flight Attendants. AFA will put any agreement reached with the Teamsters to an electronic ballot by the Frontier Flight Attendants, and to approval by the AFA Board of Directors. Both unions are dedicated to building unity among Flight Attendants to strengthen our bargaining power and improve our careers.
**Spirit Flight Attendants Fight Outsourcing**

On October 17, 98.4 percent of Spirit Flight Attendants voted to authorize a strike should management fail to reach an agreement with AFA in contract negotiations. A strike would be legal at the end of a 30-day cooling-off period following a release from mediation by the National Mediation Board. Management has been unwilling to agree to fair wages, work rules and benefits. When the airline went public this year and stock values soared, senior management officials hoarded the profits for themselves, while seeking concessions from the Flight Attendants. Spirit Flight Attendants play a vital role in the success of the airline and should reap the benefits of their labor. Instead, management is scheming to outsource international flying overseas. On October 13, AFA visited the offices of several U.S. Representatives on Capitol Hill to alert them to the job-destroying precedent such a move could set in our industry.

AFA is committed to protecting contractual scope at all of our carriers so that corporate outsourcing does not further erode good US-based jobs. Spirit Flight Attendants are standing up for our entire profession in this fight and we stand with them in solidarity. On November 1, AFA members at Spirit sent a strong message to the negotiating table in a rally at company headquarters. They protested management’s outsourcing plans and demanded movement toward a new, improved contract for the nearly 700 Flight Attendants. Their message: “We are unified and ready to do whatever it takes to achieve a contract that recognizes our contributions.” We stand with them.

**Flight Attendants Demand a Fair Contract at PSA**

A commanding 98.3 percent of PSA Airlines Flight Attendants voted on September 14 to authorize a strike, sending a clear signal to management’s negotiators. If management fails to negotiate a fair contract and continues to stall negotiations with regressive proposals, the NMB may release both parties into a 30-day cooling-off period, beginning the countdown to a strike deadline.

Members are mobilizing in force around the AFA contract campaign, with the support of the 8,500 Flight Attendants who make up the US Airways Flight Attendant Labor Alliance. Formed by Flight Attendants from US Airways, America West, Piedmont, PSA, Mesaba, Mesa and Air Wisconsin, who are represented by AFA and work at carriers who transport US Airways passengers, the Alliance was created to enhance strategic coordination for negotiations. PSA is a wholly-owned subsidiary of US Airways.
Defending Our Contracts

Our contracts are critical and we work together to enforce them.

At Spirit Airlines, for example, management unilaterally increased the health insurance premiums that Flight Attendants pay. As a result, Flight Attendants were forced to pay considerably more each month for health benefits if they chose to continue coverage. AFA filed a grievance and won, with the arbitrator ordering Spirit “to rescind its unilateral change to the flight attendants’ insurance benefit program and make whole any employee for the loss of insurance benefits.” Spirit management’s attempt to re-open the hearing was roundly rejected by the arbitrator. Now, the company must reimburse Flight Attendants for the additional monies they were forced to pay in violation of the contract.

In another example, AFA at American Eagle filed a grievance concerning whether management could reassign Flight Attendants to new flying when no portion of their trip had changed. The grievance went to arbitration and was upheld by the System Board. Importantly, the System Board retained jurisdiction over the matter with respect to the remedy. However, American Eagle management continued to violate both the collective bargaining agreement and the arbitrator’s award. They persisted in reassigning Flight Attendants to new flying when the original trip remained unchanged and the Flight Attendant remained legal and available to work it.

Invoking the System Board’s retention of jurisdiction with respect to remedy, the MEC sought to return to the original System Board to discuss these new violations. Clearly hoping to avoid returning to a System Board that had already ruled against it, American Eagle management insisted that latest violations constituted new grievances over which the original System Board had no jurisdiction. American Eagle refused to return to the original System Board, even to discuss the question of jurisdiction. AFA filed suit in federal court. On October 25, 2011 the judge ruled in favor of AFA, and ordered the parties to submit this matter to the original System Board.

AFA’s in-house legal staff consists of twelve highly-experienced attorneys who work to enforce and protect the rights of Flight Attendants—only Flight Attendants. Other unions require every local to pay for their own attorneys, or hire attorneys on a case-by-case basis, never developing the experience or the resources to get the most out of their legal representation. Through arbitration and mediation, AFA attorneys fight hard to enforce our rights and ensure that the contract is applied in the manner in which it was negotiated.

AFA attorneys also represent the union in court and fight to enforce Flight Attendants’ rights under federal law. Our Legal Department also provides legal, strategic and policy advice at all levels of our union, from industry-wide legal and bargaining strategy to the latest legislative and regulatory policy initiatives, all with the exclusive goal of enhancing the Flight Attendant profession.##
With an endless barrage of airline mergers, acquisitions and bankruptcies unsettling our work lives, Flight Attendants count on AFA to protect our seniority, work rules, scope and compensation. And, just as important, when our airlines rebrand and our uniforms change, it is AFA that helps us stay unified in our common goals for advancing our profession. AFA is the steady foundation for all of us in a turbulent industry, always there for us when the next crisis hits. That unity – all of us together in our union – helps us define who we are.

Focused 100% on our profession and the issues that matter most to us, AFA exists solely to support what we do and who we are as Flight Attendants. Even as our airlines come and go, Flight Attendants have built AFA based on the specific needs of Flight Attendants. Over nearly seven decades, AFA has evolved around the priorities set by Flight Attendants. Ours is a profession like no other and our union reflects that unique culture. When Flight Attendants speak with one voice through AFA, we send a message to management: We, as Flight Attendants, will determine our own future and our own identity.
In 2010, United Airlines, Continental Airlines and Continental Micronesia announced a merger. Suddenly, unity was not an abstract concept; it was essential for maintaining a strong voice in the new airline and for building a common future.

Under the Railway Labor Act, the merger meant that Flight Attendants would have the opportunity to vote for one union and coordinate our efforts for a strong contract. The National Mediation Board (NMB) certified AFA on June 29, 2011, as the collective bargaining representative for Flight Attendants at the new United.

With the welcome addition of the Continental and Continental Micronesia Flight Attendants, our AFA culture is expanded and enriched. Sixty-six years ago, United Flight Attendants founded AFA. Since then, Flight Attendants from dozens more airlines have joined AFA, each group bringing its own strengths and leaving its indelible mark on the evolution of our identity as Flight Attendants.

AFA members following the NMB announcement of a 2,200 vote margin win for AFA, from left to right: Kevin Creighan, United; Michelle Quintus, United; Jeff Heisey, United; Linda Farrow, United; Lane Bale, Continental; Sara Nelson, United; Veda Shook, Alaska; Martina Magloc, Continental; Greg Davidowitch, United; and Frank Brown, Continental.

Continental Micronesia Flight Attendants Ret Katz, Stuart Arricayos and United Flight Attendant Chris Bruton mark the moment in July when over 50 percent of the CMI Flight Attendants had signed AFA membership applications.
Mesaba-Colgan-Pinnacle Merger

As we go to press, Mesaba Flight Attendants are taking a strong, unified stance for their rights in a merger with Pinnacle. Senior management officials have repeatedly redefined the merger, both in an attempt to avoid their obligations to negotiate with AFA, and in an effort to drive the strong Flight Attendant union from the property. Management told Mesaba Flight Attendants that their jobs would be eliminated, and then gave them an “offer of employment” at Pinnacle. The catch: they would be working with one-third of their seniority, none of their current contractual protections and no AFA representation.

The Mesaba Flight Attendants are anxiously awaiting a decision by the National Mediation Board (NMB) regarding a single carrier decision. While the airlines, and the Flight Attendants, remain separated, the date for combining them has slipped from December 1, 2011 to January 4, 2012, extending by a crucial month AFA’s representation of the Mesaba Flight Attendants. If the NMB rules in favor of AFA’s single-carrier filing, a union representation election will take place and Mesaba Flight Attendants will have the right once again to choose AFA for the best protection and the advancement of their careers. Mesaba Flight Attendants are unified in defining their voice and maintaining their Flight Attendant identity in AFA.

Atlantic Southeast-ExpressJet Merger

The merger of Atlantic Southeast (ASA) and ExpressJet (XJT) will affect over 2,300 Flight Attendants and create the world’s first “super-regional” airline. The merged airline will bear the ExpressJet name and display the ASA colors and logos. While the marketing is new, the Flight Attendants will be a constant; another reminder that, first and foremost, we are Flight Attendant professionals.

At press time, voting is underway in a representation election for ASA and XJT Flight Attendants, who are voting on a union, not a contract. For ASA Flight Attendants, who have been AFA members for over 20 years, the choice is clear, because a vote for AFA means:
- The best of both contracts;
- Our quality of life, our careers;
- Guaranteed seniority; and
- AFA’s 100% focus on Flight Attendants.

Your AFA Dues Dollar: A Good Value

AFA is here for you because your dues investment maintains the essential programs and services that AFA members rely on every day. Everyone hears about negotiations and grievances, but your union dues dollar pays for so much more.

Of course, everybody pays dues in one form or another: your homeowners association, your shopping club, your gym. AFA works hard to provide the best value for your membership and the maximum value for your dues dollar. And it’s not just about providing a service in a union – it’s about making sure we have the resources to support our activism as Flight Attendants. We are AFA – the dues are simply one way that we all chip in and collectively contribute to defend and advance our careers.

AFA is committed to maintaining a sound financial base to support activities that benefit AFA members. As with any non-profit organization, if dues fall behind inflation, services suffer. From 1993-2007, dues were $39; and, since 2008, they have remained at $43. AFA dues rates are still among the lowest in the industry.

The method established within our Constitution and Bylaws (C&B) ensures that the dues structure adjusts annually to at least keep up with inflation. Prior to the start of each fiscal year, we take a snapshot of the dues average of all CWA members, including AFA, to determine the dues rate for the future budget year. This dues realignment, referred to as the ‘CWA dues average,’ will do just that.

When AFA merged with CWA in 2003, AFA members voted to adopt the CWA dues average that is now incorporated in our C&B. Dues have held relatively steady since 1993. Rising just once in 18 years by only $4 does not even keep up with inflation. When you consider the voice we have through our union, and all of the services and programs that AFA members receive — and will continue to receive, we get a tremendous value for our dues dollar.

We are AFA — the dues are simply one way that we all chip in and collectively contribute to defend and advance our careers.

Here’s Just Some of What You Get for Your Dues Dollar:

• A negotiated contract.
• Grievance procedures with due process and contract enforcement.
• Professional negotiators and labor attorneys.
• Safety and health advocates for your safety.
• A strong voice on Capitol Hill.
• An award-winning Employee Assistance Program.

“Making the most of your dues - but not keeping pace with inflation.”

www.afacwa.org

Flightlog
Advancing Flight Attendant Careers Through Strong Alliances

AFA works exclusively to advance our Flight Attendant contracts and our profession. Mobilizing members in support of our AFA negotiating committees, both at our individual airlines and across our industry, are keystones to achieving our immediate contract goals. And, the alliances we form beyond AFA are equally important to our long-term goals for building our career. AFA works in numerous alliances to advance and protect our profession:

• As an autonomous sector of CWA, AFA reaps many benefits from the AFA-CWA merger including a 700,000-member, 50-state political network.
• Through our affiliation with the AFL-CIO, Flight Attendants speak with the strength of the entire labor movement – over 12 million strong – on issues of national significance that directly impact our profession, like employment security, retirement security, health care and rights at work.
• In collaboration with the AFL-CIO Transportation Trades Department (TTD), AFA works to advance our Flight Attendant issues on Capitol Hill.
• AFA lobbies members of Congress for the inclusion of strong Flight Attendant protections in the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reauthorization.
• International President Veda Shook’s position on the AFL-CIO Executive Council and the US Labor Advisory Committee for Trade Negotiations and Trade Policy (LAC) led to her inclusion in meetings of the US Department of State on international trade agreements, where she was able to argue forcefully on behalf of preventing exportation of our jobs.
• As Spirit Airlines management positions the airline to use the Colombia Free Trade Agreement to outsource international flying, AFA is targeting lawmakers to stop any outsourcing of our work dead in its tracks.
• Our voice was loud and clear in the 2008 elections and, as a result, office holders and administrators are attuned to Flight Attendant issues. From the White House to the NMB, we have seen improvements in addressing our needs. Through our effective advocacy and alliance building, former AFA International President Linda Puchala was appointed to the National Mediation Board (NMB). Now, Flight Attendant issues are moving more quickly through the NMB.
• AFA is part of a global network of cabin crew, through the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) which affords us a strong voice on issues that affect our profession in the international arena.
• AFA is in discussions with the Teamsters about negotiating a joint representation agreement for the Frontier, Chautauqua, Shuttle America, and Republic Airlines Flight Attendants to strengthen our bargaining power and improve our careers.
• AFA endorsed the Occupy Wall Street movement in recognition that we are among the 99 percent who are targeted to work harder for less while the other one percent profits. The Occupy movement is an expression of the outrage felt by a growing number of people, including AFA members, over corporate greed. In the past 20 years, American worker productivity has risen by 62 percent while wages have remained flat. Across our union, members are pushing back as part of a larger struggle for equality, democracy and justice.

Flight Attendants do not exist in isolation: we are part of the bigger picture. What happens to labor in Ohio affects us, and what happens to health care in New Jersey affects us. In order to best serve the members of AFA, our union maintains a broad scope of partnerships, from industry to labor, and from local to global.

Your Right to Vote Is at Risk

Early and absentee voting have long been the methods that make it possible for flight crews and others with busy schedules to participate in elections, allowing you to cast your vote before Election Day in person or by absentee mail ballot. In what is widely viewed as an attack on working people with busy schedules, the Florida and Wisconsin state legislatures have restricted in-person absentee voting, and similar bills are under consideration in Ohio and North Carolina. The bills place additional requirements on voter registration and identification, halve the number of in-person early voting days and eliminate Sunday voting. In alliance with CWA and the AFL-CIO, AFA is working to protect the voting rights of working families.

Maintain Your Voice

At www.longdistancevoter.org, you can:
1. Verify your voter registration
2. Check voter registration deadlines
3. Request an absentee ballot
AFA EAP Creates Flight Attendant-Specific Substance Abuse Treatment Program

The Flight Attendant Drug and Alcohol Program (FADAP) ensures that Flight Attendants have access to a substance abuse program that is tailored specifically for Flight Attendants. This program, designed, promoted and run by AFA, is available to Flight Attendants regardless of affiliation or employer, and provides assistance how and when it is needed. It is a tremendous resource and benefit for Flight Attendants across the country.

FADAP was formed after AFA designed and proposed the program to Congress, and lobbied to win funding from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). After a highly competitive bidding process, the FAA awarded AFA a three-year contract to run FADAP.

In 2011, FADAP launched “Wings of Sobriety,” the first-ever online 12-step meeting for Flight Attendants who are in need of recovery or are recovering from alcoholism and/or drug addiction. The online format allows Flight Attendants to access recovery support even while traveling, with one-hour meetings scheduled Monday and Friday evenings at 8 pm EST. All moderators are recovering Flight Attendants. To register, go to www.sober24.com and click on “Free Membership” on the right. Once you are registered, click on “Chat” at the top, Scroll down to “Wings of Sobriety” and enter.

FADAP is just one more example of the difference AFA makes in the lives of all Flight Attendants.

AFA supports Flight Attendants both on and off the job, with programs and services that are tailored specifically for Flight Attendants.
Gaining Recognition for Flight Attendants as First Responders

This year marked the 10th anniversary of September 11, 2001, a day that forever transformed our industry, our nation and our profession. We continue to bear witness to the incredible heroism of our fellow Flight Attendants with the knowledge that it could have been any Flight Attendant in their shoes.

For many people around the world, the events of that fateful day cemented the image of Flight Attendants as the first responders of aviation. Every day we respond to emergency evacuations, in-flight fires, medical crises and security challenges. That, of course, is just what first responders do.

Recognition of Flight Attendants as first responders is a central part of AFA’s lobbying and networking at all levels of government. By framing the dialog in the media, and educating the public, AFA seeks to advance our recognition as first responders and safety professionals. AFA’s Air Safety, Health and Security Department advocates for improvements including:

- hands-free wireless cabin-to-cockpit communications;
- protections against Flight Attendant fatigue;
- adequate security training and expedited security screening as ‘Known Crewmembers’; and
- cabin health and safety standards.

Visit AFA’s online Never Forget 9/11 memorial to the Flight Attendant heroes who lost their lives in the line of duty on that tragic day at www.afacwa.org/neverforget.

Heroes Within Our Union

Flight Attendants save lives, responding to emergencies every day. In an extraordinary example of first responder heroism, Continental Airlines Flight Attendants Al Felipe, Pam Howard and Regina Ressler performed their duties with flawless professionalism.

On December 20, 2008, Continental Airlines flight 1404, a Boeing 737-500, departed the left side of a Denver airport runway resulting in a crash and fire. The captain and five of the 110 passengers were seriously injured, while others sustained minor injuries. Al, Pam and Regina began an immediate evacuation from the burning airplane as soon as it came to a stop. Blocking egress where fire was visible, they held up fallen ceiling panels, and commanded an orderly, safe exit. We are grateful for their life-saving work and we are proud of how they represented all Flight Attendants as first responders and safety professionals.

We honor our Flight Attendant heroes.
Whether you layover at the airport or downtown, maintaining your safety is the top priority. Your AFA Hotel Committee works to make sure your accommodations are as safe and comfortable as possible, and in compliance with contractual requirements. You can add another layer of security by taking control of your surroundings, always being aware and alert, and by following these tips whenever possible:

- Know the name of your hotel and how to get there before leaving your domicile.
- Have your room assigned close to other crewmembers.
- Keep luggage in your possession or secured at all times.
- Place valuables in a hotel or in-room safe or leave them at home.
- Take note of fire exits.
- Inspect the room with a buddy stationed at the open door.
- Do not invite a person you have just met into your hotel room.
- If someone knocks on your door, ask for their identity. Call the hotel desk if you are uncertain.
- Dress in a way that does not draw attention. Avoid wearing expensive jewelry.
- Carry a personal ID and cell phone at all times.
- Travel in numbers to areas that are confirmed as safe by the hotel concierge or front desk staff.
- When you leave the hotel, tell someone where you are going and when you plan to return or leave a note of your intended plans in your room by the phone.

Interactive is AFA’s e-newsletter, with news from around our union. In each issue, a special “Airline Focus” column highlights AFA activity at one of the 24 AFA member airlines. Past editions of the newsletter are available at www.afacwa.org.

E-Activist alerts are sent directly to your inbox whenever an urgent Flight Attendant issue is unfolding. When you join the E-Activist network, you become a force for positive change in the Flight Attendant profession. To sign up for Interactive and E-Activist, go to www.afacwa.org and click on “AFA Interactive.”
39th Annual Board of Directors to Meet in February in Los Angeles

The 39th annual AFA-CWA Board of Directors (BOD) meeting will take place February 6-8, 2012 in Los Angeles. The Board, AFA’s highest governing body, will work to establish priorities and strategies for the upcoming year. The BOD consists of the presidents of all Local Councils who are elected directly by you, the members, as well as your AFA International and MEC officers who are ex-officio (non-voting) members. They bring their local experience, and your input, to this meeting each year, giving you a voice in setting the priorities of our union. All members in good standing are encouraged to attend. Look for updates on www.afacwa.org. We expect to conduct a solidarity event during the Board and will call on all Flight Attendants to join in the event.

The 38th annual AFA-CWA Board of Directors, April 11-13, 2011, included AFA representatives from 21 airlines and our Flight Attendant union continues to grow.