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Senate Tells Northwest/Delta to Honor Workers Rights In Merger

As a result of the IAM's lobbying efforts, 26 influential Senators this week wrote the CEOs of Northwest Airlines and Delta Airlines to urge management to "demonstrate a genuine commitment to cooperative labor relations." The text of the letter is below.

April 21, 2008

Dear Mr. Anderson and Mr. Steenland,

Last week, Delta Air Lines and Northwest Airlines announced that they plan to merge to form the nation's largest airline.

A Delta-Northwest merger will have a major impact on millions of passengers, hundreds of communities, and our national economy. It will also affect the tens of thousands of employees whose hard work and tremendous sacrifices have greatly contributed to the vitality of both Delta and Northwest.

As we have seen in the past, support of airline employees is essential to the success of any contemplated merger. The men and women who work hard every day for Delta and Northwest deserve a seat at the table and the opportunity to establish their working conditions. They also deserve to have confidence that the merger will protect their job security, wages, and pension benefits, not undermine them.

We understand that Delta and Northwest management have not yet offered their employees a seat at the table in the merger talks, other than some discussions with the pilots' union. We urge you to engage all of the relevant unions and employees in the ongoing merger process.

We also hope that the merger process will not be used as a way to eliminate the union representation that has existed at Northwest for decades. As hundreds of thousands of airline employees can attest, union representation substantially improves the wages, benefits, and working conditions of all employees.

We urge Delta and Northwest management to demonstrate a genuine commitment to cooperative labor relations by recognizing and bargaining with a majority of Delta or Northwest workers that identifies a union representative. We also urge Delta and Northwest to remain neutral and not engage in any untoward tactics in future union representation elections, particularly during the election for Delta's flight attendants later this month.

Without expressing an opinion on the merger itself, we believe that both companies can certainly ensure a better future by cooperating with and respecting their workers. We share the goal of building a prosperous future for the airline industry and its employees, and look forward to working with you to make that goal a reality.

With respect and appreciation,

Sincerely,

Edward M. Kennedy
Daniel K. Inouye
Amy Klobuchar
Carl Levin
Debbie Stabenow
Sherrod Brown
Charles E. Schumer

Hillary Rodham Clinton
Richard J. Durbin
Barack Obama
Patty Murray
John D. Rockefeller IV
Christopher J. Dodd
John F. Kerry

Tom Harkin
Barbara Boxer
Barbara A. Mikulski
Frank R. Lautenberg
Jack Reed
Joseph R. Biden, Jr.

Bernard Sanders
Daniel K. Akaka
Ron Wyden
Robert Menendez
Robert P. Casey, Jr.
Sheldon Whitehouse