



March 11, 2010

FAA Invites Recipes for Recovery

“Without a serious commitment to protecting jobs, without new limits on unrestrained outsourcing and without a second stimulus program that is equal to the crisis this nation is facing, the airline and aerospace industries will continue to struggle, even if the rest of the economy recovers,” said International President Tom Buffenbarger, who spoke as the sole labor representative at the FAA 35th Annual Aviation Forecast Conference in Washington, D.C.

The two-day conference, titled *“Looking Ahead in Aviation: Rational Rebound or Irrational Instability,”* was hosted by Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood and FAA Administrator Randy Babbitt and included panel discussion with experts in aviation, aerospace and business aviation.

In response to a question about the future of the aerospace industry, Buffenbarger called for a serious commitment to training and securing jobs for the next generation of aerospace workers, who would replace the current crop of precision metalworkers, avionics technicians and mechanical engineers. “The current workforce in this industry is second to none, but rapidly approaching retirement age,” said Buffenbarger. “If we fail to recognize and react to this crisis, we will invite more, not less outsourcing.”

Buffenbarger was joined by Bryan Bedford, Chairman, President and CEO, Republic Airways, Scott Kirby, President, US Airways, Gary Chase, Managing Director, Barclays plc and Robert Wilson, President, Business & General Aviation – Honeywell Aerospace.

The panelists were questioned if the industry-wide downturn would lead to further consolidation in the airline industry. While some cite the current recession as a rationale for further consolidation, the IAM points to the industry’s record since 1978, which includes more than 40 airline mergers, 162 bankruptcies and 150 low-cost start-ups, with less than a dozen still operating.

“Mergers and consolidations have been a fact of life in this industry for nearly four decades,” said Buffenbarger. “Unfortunately, they have rarely benefited passengers, employees, shareholders or the traveling public. We simply cannot afford to continue promoting mergers as the answer to every cyclical downturn.”

When asked what labor’s role might be in the emerging recovery, Buffenbarger called the current situation an opportunity to forge labor-management partnerships that transcend the traditional collective bargaining relationships. “We need to look beyond the adversary method of reaching new contracts,” said Buffenbarger. “We are prepared to sit down and broker long-term agreements that provide security for our members and stability for the companies that employ them. It may require a leap of faith on all sides, but I believe we cannot allow this opportunity to pass.”



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IAM, Alaska Airlines Open Negotiations

The International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM) District 143 today announced it has opened collective bargaining for an amended contract covering 2,800 Alaska Airlines employees in the clerical, office and passenger service (COPS) group. The current agreement becomes amendable on July 19, 2010.

"In these negotiations, just as in the rest of the country, job security is a major issue," said IAM District 143 President Stephen Gordon. "Improving our members' job security and ensuring a successful Alaska Airlines are not mutually exclusive."

Direct bargaining began March 2, 2010 after members rejected an Alaska Airlines offer to extend the current agreement until 2012. The extension was rejected over job security issues.

"Our first sessions were productive, and the IAM's negotiating committee is prepared for intensive bargaining to reach an expedited agreement," said Gordon. "We hope Alaska Airlines shares our commitment."



The District 143 negotiating committee prepares for a bargaining session.
(L-R) Sandy Field, Bea Knott, Jeff Tobius, Joe Shultz and Kiana Peacock.