

# CWA in the Airline Industry

CWA has 55,000 members in the airline industry: 40,000 flight attendants who are in AFA-CWA, and 15,000+ passenger service agents from US Airways, American, and Piedmont Airlines.

## History in Passenger Service

### US Airways

**1995:** Passenger Service workers at US Airways came to CWA to ask for support in forming a union. Group is approximately 10,000 airport ticket and gate agents as well as reservations representatives.

**1996:** first election with CWA—a plurality of workers voted for CWA (i.e. a majority of those who voted), but due to the NMB rules at that time requiring a majority of ELIGIBLE votes to vote yes, they lost the election. We filed objections to the management interference in that election and the NMB ordered a rerun election.

**1997:** the workers won the re-run election with 55% (of those eligible) voting yes. We started bargaining, but the company took the NMB to court and in 1999 got a court to overturn the 2<sup>nd</sup> election.

**1999:** 3<sup>rd</sup> election is held and US Airways workers vote YES by the largest % of any airline election to date at that point. They vote to ratify their first contract that same year.

**2005:** US Airways merged with America West, where the agents had just voted to be represented by the IBT. Rather than fight about which union the combined group would be part of, they created the CWA-IBT Association, which jointly bargains the contracts. In the Eastern U.S. agents belong to CWA, and in the West they are IBT members.

**2013-14:** US Airways merged with American Airlines. See below – since AA was non-union another election was held to determine whether the combined group would be part of CWA. 86% voted yes.

### American Airlines

**1997:** After seeing the victory with US A Passenger Service agents, AA agents came to CWA with a petition signed by over 200 leaders around the country.

**1998:** the first election of 17,600 agents/ reps was held. We filed for the election with 57% signing cards, but only 42% of the eligible voters voted yes (again, under the rules at the time, everyone who did not vote was counted as a no vote).

**2001:** AA agents were signing cards to try for a 2<sup>nd</sup> election when AA bought TWA, adding another 4,100 agents to the group. The group was building for a joint election when 9/11 happened. Thousands of workers were furloughed and reservations offices closed over the next years. All furloughed employees were eligible to vote, but they were almost impossible to get in contact with. The AA agents opted to create a membership organization to maintain a leadership and communication structure during this period.

**2010:** The NMB election rules changed – elections would now be decided by a majority of those who voted, like most other elections in a democracy.

**2011:** We filed for an election, but AA went to court to get an injunction, refusing to turn over mailing labels to the NMB to send out ballots, etc. AA used their bankruptcy as an excuse to contract out passenger service work.

**2012:** Election held for the remaining 7,800 passenger service employees; the union lost by 150 votes.

**2013:** US Airways announced their intention to merge with AA.

**2014:** 86% vote yes in election for combined group of 15,500 passenger service workers.

## **Piedmont**

A wholly-owned subsidiary of US Airways that operates as US Airways Express. The Piedmont flight attendants are AFA-CWA represented, like at Envoy. Like Envoy, the passenger service work is different depending on the location. Agents may staff the gate and ticket counters, work on the ramp (“below the wing”) or a combination of both. Piedmont also has contracts to perform ground work for a number of other airlines.

Piedmont agents have voted in 4 elections.

**2008:** 3<sup>rd</sup> election held. Agents came within 60 votes of winning. 48% of the eligible voters participated in the election. Under the old rules, the union lost.

**2010:** 4<sup>th</sup> election held to take advantage of the rules change; agents won with 65% voting yes. There were 2,867 workers in the unit and they approved their first contract in 2012.

## **American Eagle/Envoy**

While the organizing at American was taking place, Eagle employees at the hub airports contacted us wanting to be represented by CWA.

**1999:** we filed for an election with passenger service employees at the hub airports. The company disputed the unit, claiming that the non-hub airports should be included, even where the agents only did ramp work. The organizing committee along with CWA decided that a national, all-station unit would build a stronger union and withdrew the filing.

**2001:** After building support across the country, the group filed for an election and the ballot count was conducted on 9/12/01. Even though ballots were mailed in (now voting is done electronically), and no mail had been able to be delivered for 2 days to the NMB office in Washington DC, they refused to delay the vote count. Only 36% of the eligible voters participated in the election.

**2015:** Envoy workers are trying again! The unit has grown to 5,000 strong and they can see from US Airways, AA, and Piedmont that if you stay with it you can do it.

**ONE DAY LONGER, EACH DAY STRONGER**