In the past few years, thousands of customer service jobs in the United States have disappeared. But demand isn’t shrinking, and profits aren’t down. Companies are shipping good jobs overseas to boost profits. As a result, workers, families, and communities get hurt.

CWA members are asking Congress to pass some common sense legislation that:

- Requires that U.S. callers be told the location of the call center to which they are speaking.
- Offers callers the opportunity to be connected to a U.S.-based call center.
- Makes U.S. companies who offshore their call center jobs ineligible for certain federal grants and taxpayer-funded loans.

If you want to keep customer service jobs here, please take a moment to sign the CWA petition at: https://actionnetwork.org/petitions/tell-congress-stop-call-center-offshoring

Tell Congress to Act Now: Keep Call Center Jobs in US

AA Reservations Agents Meet to Serve Members Better

In December, Executive Board members from INT and RDU came together at a Local 3640 meeting in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, to share ideas and get to know each other’s concerns. Most members at INT are Legacy US Airways passenger service agents, and members at RDU are Legacy American Airlines agents. Since the merger of American and US Airways, local officers have worked hard to make the transition as seamless as possible, but some obstacles remain.

A key issue is the slow progress the company is making in combining Attendance Control Policy and Performance Metrics for LAA and LUS agents. In December, representatives from both groups shared strategies for handling grievances and ways of bringing their diverse members together. Using social media and the Local 3640 web site for communication was one of the ideas discussed.

Everyone in attendance felt progress was solid, and members agreed to hold quarterly joint Executive Board meetings to keep up the momentum and communication. “It gave me great joy to see how well we worked together for the same purpose,” said Vickey Hoots, President of Local 3640.
“We Wear the Same Uniform. Let’s Stand Up for Each Other.”

In our day-to-day work lives sometimes we forget that whether we’re mainline agents or regional agents, we’re really all on the same side as workers. American agents, Envoy agents, and Piedmont agents ride the same employee buses to work, wear the same blue shirts and trousers, laugh at the same inside jokes, and talk in the same shorthand airport lingo. But often we don’t talk to each other and don’t understand all the challenges we have in common.

“We work for the same corporation, and we wear the same uniform, so let’s stand up for each other,” says Carolyn Marsalek, a thirty-year veteran of the busy American Airlines ORD station and vice president of CWA Local 4201.

It’s in our own best interest as mainline workers to support regional agents as they bargain for better pay and benefits, Carolyn explains. “In Chicago, for example, half our flights are feeding in from Envoy and we need those agents to be the best they can be. When they feel valued and do a good job, our job is easier.”

“But it’s also about our job security. We want regional agents to have strong contracts that provide incentives for the company to keep stations up and running as professionally as possible, and not try to offload them to lower quality, third-party vendors. If that happens, we all lose.”

The bottom line is that as passenger service employees—whether we’re mainline or regional—we all know the day-to-day struggles of getting the job done, meeting all the expectations of management and customers, and then going home and trying to keep our families and homes running smoothly. We’re in this together, and we need to remember that.

Debora Sutor, International Vice President for the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA, couldn’t agree more. "Management wants workers to be divided, and to fight among ourselves because that's how they gain leverage. But if we link arms and say that we will fight these big pay and benefits discrepancies, we can protect both mainline and regional employees," says Debora. "We call our program at AFA "Bridge the Gap," which means we want to address the big gaps in wages, work rules, and benefits, because doing so will help everyone and stop the race to the bottom we see in so many airlines."

Kevin Creighan, AFA-CWA International Secretary-Treasurer, notes that, "In terms of mainline and regional carriers, management wants us to see ourselves in competition, but we aren't. We do the same job. We're in the same family. It's still a work in progress, but we're making a lot of positive gains in coming together."

Carolyn adds, “When it suits the company, they treat us all the same, but when it’s to their advantage to separate us in order to weaken our bargaining position, the company puts up walls between us and treats regional agents like second-class citizens. It’s a slippery slope, isn’t it? If we let one group of agents be treated as less than—isn’t it just a matter of time before that happens to us too?”

“We don’t need any more walls between us,” says Carolyn. “We need bridges connecting all American employees—and even connecting management and workers. I have some hope that that’s where we’re going. I hope mainline agents will reach out to regional agents at trainings, on the bus or subway, and even in line at the coffee kiosk, and share some words of support. It may be a cliché, but it’s true: We are all stronger together.”
Delvorie Meighan shares a story about a successful grievance procedure for a member at O’Hare who was disciplined for failing an aircraft search. Her story is an example of how valuable the on-the-ground work of each CWA steward is in meeting the needs of members. From the moment a problem arises, through each stage of the grievance procedure, stewards and other union representatives are there to provide expertise and support when agents are feeling the most vulnerable. Delvorie explains how she pursued and won a typical case:

Delvorie Meighan has been a passenger service agent for Envoy Airlines at ORD for five years and is now a steward.

During a two-person search of an aircraft, one of the agents took the front while the other agent started from the back, and they met at the designated exit row. During the boarding process a passenger seated in the front half of the aircraft found a forbidden item attached to the seat belt. The manager on duty that day issued both agents a first-step advisory, even though the agents wrote statements saying exactly which area of the aircraft each was responsible for. The member felt this was unfair to her and discouraged teamwork, so she decided to grieve the advisory.

When I was first asked to be a steward for this case, I thought it would be easy because our member followed procedures, and this was the way agents have conducted searches for at least the past 18 years. During our initial meeting for the first-step grievance, it seemed as though management had created new local practices to justify disciplining both agents. The argument was that each employee on the aircraft should go over the other’s searched areas to ensure they were secure. We thought this defeated the purpose of having two agents search an aircraft, especially during a quick turn.

I wasn’t sure if this incident had happened before, how management had handled it, or even if there was an official policy and procedure for conducting two-person aircraft searches. I decided to start my information gathering with the station trainer. Within an hour I received a reply that there was no such thing as a two-person aircraft search policy.

I then called American Airlines mainline, because Envoy mirrors just about everything AA does, and I learned that Prospect conducts the aircraft searches for American. The Prospect trainer explained that they assign sections of the aircraft to an individual and at the end of the day if something were to happen, only that person would be held responsible.

I prepared and submitted my written appeal for our second-level grievance to the hub EIC. I briefed another steward who took over the second step. In the end, after reviewing all of the details—including the fact that there is no proper training manual in place for the agents to follow—the hub EIC agreed the discipline was unjust and removed the advisory from the member’s file.

Congratulations to Delvorie for a successful outcome in Chicago!
In January we learned that mobilization for an important cause really works. A decade-long, nationwide effort by passenger service agents represented by CWA to protect all airline employees from physical and verbal abuse by passengers succeeded on Wednesday, January 11. The U.S. Department of Justice confirmed that a 2002 statute (49 U.S.C. § 46503) that set criminal penalties and jail time for people who commit assaults against airport or air carrier employees with security duties in fact does apply to passenger service agents, as well as to TSA and law enforcement officers.

“Most of the people we spoke to about this issue didn’t even know it was that a big of a problem for me and my co workers. It was just a matter of knocking on some doors, making some meetings, and being loud and proud about my problems. Being on the other side of it feels amazing. I’m really grateful to have a more safe work environment,” says Amanda Mitchell (Envoy-DFW)

Read more at: http://www.cwaagents.org/news/huge-victory-all-airline-employees

Site Visits Unify Local 3645 Members

The Executive Board of Local 3645 is determined to connect with new shop stewards and members at as many Piedmont stations as possible. Their goal is to instill confidence and lend a helping hand through these site visits.

The Local 3645 team recently visited Louisville (SDF), Greenville-Spartanburg (GSP), and Wilmington (ILM). At SDF they were able to help negotiate the return of a terminated agent. And at GSP the Executive Board encouraged new shop stewards Gayle Fesperman and Cherrie Sims to open a dialogue with their station manager. New monthly meetings at GSP are now in the works. The ILM visit was a follow-up with steward Dylan McPhee, who has been successful in solving problems and improving the culture at the station through weekly meetings with management.

“We’re visiting our stations regularly and will keep it up until we get enough area representatives in place,” says Local 3645 Vice President Donielle Prophete. “We want to make sure our members know they have our support. The visits definitely help unify Piedmont passenger service agents as a team.”

The next Piedmont Bargaining Meeting is MARCH 7TH -9TH!

If you haven’t completed a Piedmont Mobilization Card, do it now online!

http://sgiz.mobi/s3/Piedmont-Mobilization-Card

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Our Voice Was Heard in DC: Victory on the Air Rage Issue