Pressures Mount in America’s Airports

If you think traveling through airports is tough, try working in one.

“"We want to elevate the customer experience as much as management does, but what the airline fails to realize is that it’s passengers who are escalating the situations, and we don’t have enough tools for handling things right now.”

— Envoy Agent Susanne Skowronski, ORD

Agents report that it’s never been this bad. Susanne Skowronski, an Envoy agent at ORD for the past five years, says that recently unruly passengers seem to have multiplied, and she feels management is not responding to workers’ concerns. “It just doesn’t seem like the company backs its employees,” says Susanne. “It would make a difference if management were more present instead of leaving agents alone to deal with every problem. They just say we should diffuse the situation using our best judgment. We need help.”

Troy Pickett, an Envoy agent at ORD for the past six years, is a CWA Steward and Acting Lead Agent. Troy says that it’s important to track abusive passenger behavior. “If people are threatening us repeatedly, we have to review their files and make sure that abusive incidents are recorded so we can know when to take action.”

Read more: http://bit.ly/2tMDDiM
American Agents Win in Puerto Rico’s Legislature
“They shut one door, and we found another.”

When American Airlines workers in Puerto Rico realized that an essential aspect of their contract was in jeopardy as a result of outdated laws, CWA Local 3140 joined with Transportation Workers Union (TWU) Local 501 to make sure the legislature addressed the problem. Local 3140 Vice President Georgina Felix explains that the Local protected the flexible “swap” system that helps so many workers maintain the balance between dedication to their jobs and family responsibilities. “Without the swap system,” says Georgina, “a lot of workers just could not keep their jobs.”

Throughout most of her career, Georgina and other agents in Puerto Rico worked for US Airways, which always allowed shift swaps. This valued part of the contract meant that if an agent were needed at home to care for children or sick or elderly family members, he or she could work fewer days for longer hours. Unfortunately, when US Airways and American merged to become the new American Airlines, the company declared it could not honor swaps because the new company was not exempt (as US Airways had been) from a 1948 overtime law.

Georgina, Local 3140 President Ellis Ryan, Area Representative Heyda Delgado, and the other officers knew that many of their members depended on the swap system. Members of CWA and TWU initially brought a complaint to the U.S. Department of Labor, first meeting with officials out in the street because another union was protesting a different issue, and had blockaded the building.

As they worked to change the law, Georgina says that she and others were told to “sit down and be quiet, because things are not going to change, and we shouldn’t give people false hope.” But they persisted. “They shut one door,” says Georgina, “but we found another. I told them that one day this fat lady’s going to sing ‘hallelujah,’ and that’s what happened.”

Read more: http://bit.ly/2s9O1qt

Taking Action for Agent Safety

Earlier this year, CWA passenger service agents applauded the move of the Department of Justice and Department of Transportation confirming that the Aviation and Transportation Security Act did, in fact, consider assaults on agents to be federal crimes. The law, 49 U.S.C. 46503, sets federal penalties for interfering with airport and airline personnel who have security duties.

This was an important step in protecting agents on the job, but we have more work to do to ensure that DOT, TSA, airlines, airports, and law enforcement do their part to enforce the law.

CWA is providing recommendations and guidance to ensure that everyone with a stake in protecting agents has the information and tools needed to do just that. This includes providing critical information about what to do if assaulted. You can download a wallet-size card here: https://www.cwa-union.org/sites/default/files/cwa-passenger-service-assault-card.pdf This card cites the relevant law and the steps an agent should take when assaulted. You can also find information in a downloadable leaflet designed to post on union bulletin boards. Download the leaflet here: https://www.cwa-union.org/sites/default/files/cwa-passenger-service-assault-poster.pdf
The CWA Bargaining Committee met with the Envoy Bargaining Committee in May to present a comprehensive proposal to the Company. This means that the union has now presented an entire package to the Company, and we will not be able to add any new items to the package.

The meeting began with CWA presenting both new proposals and a response to some of the existing proposals. The committee gave the company proposals on General Articles, Shift Differentials, Premium Pay, Meals and Breaks, Leaves of Absence, Classifications, Definitions, Benefits, and Wages. Our proposal contains a wage scale based on seniority and consistent with our involvement with the Fight for Fifteen.


**Dates to Remember**

*Piedmont Bargaining: July 18-20*

*Envoy Bargaining: July 25-27*

Piedmont Bargaining Springs Forward

The CWA-Piedmont Bargaining Team met with the airline’s team in March, April, and May to continue working toward a fair and equitable contract. So far, the team members have come to agreement on Article 6, Hours of Service; Article 14, Leaves of Absence; Article 18, Safety and Health; Article 19, Grievance Procedure; Article 20, System Board of Adjustment; Article 21, No Strike, No Lockout; Article 22, Union Representation; Article 23, Union Security; Article 25, Political Action Fund; Article 26, Non-discrimination; and a new article on Medical Examinations.

On April 19, the CWA bargaining team held a Town Hall Call to discuss progress made and the importance of mobilization. If you missed the call and would like to hear the questions and answers, you can find the recording here: http://bit.ly/2trKGTE

Anthony Barden, President of CWA Local 3645 in Charlotte, North Carolina, said, “Although we’re pleased with the agreements the Team has reached so far, we still have a ways to go. So much is at stake and member engagement in the process is key. Our bargaining team will have more Town Hall Calls and share information with members in a variety of ways as we continue to push for real improvements at the bargaining table.”

Anthony recently took the place of Donielle Prophete on the Bargaining Committee when Donielle stepped down for personal reasons. Anthony said that everyone at Local 3645 appreciates Donielle’s tireless efforts on behalf of her coworkers, “The fight will continue, but we will miss her!”

For more details on each bargaining session, take a look at the bargaining reports on our new web site: http://www.piedmontagent.org/piedmont-airlines/bargaining-updates
In May, four CWA members from American Airlines attended a two-day training session in Dallas for internal organizers. The training session included more than three dozen union members from American, AT&T, and other companies. The representatives from American Airlines included Deborah Johnson, Debbie Amaro, Chris Kress, and Renee de la Garza.

Deborah Johnson, a 26-year American Airlines veteran who is a reservations representative, says she was inspired and energized by the experience. “I’ve been interested in organizing a union at American for 20 years, and now am so proud to say that I’m a union member. The training helped me think outside my little world and to see how many people in this country have no power. I’ve got a good job now, with good pay, but I know it can be taken away so quickly. If we don’t get everyone else unionized, it will end up hurting us.”

Read more: http://bit.ly/2s9vJpp

“In Boot Camp” Training in Dallas Inspires American Organizers

“If we don’t get everyone else unionized, it will end up hurting us.”

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Read more: http://bit.ly/2s9vJpp

Update: Call Center Legislation Gains

In April and May, the CWA-backed U.S. Call Center Worker and Consumer Protection Act saw positive momentum as a result of our collective efforts. In May, two more Senators—Tammy Duckworth and Dick Durbin of Illinois—signed on as co-sponsors of the bill. To date, we’ve collected more than 26,000 petition signatures in person and online. If you haven’t signed your name yet, you can still add it here: http://bit.ly/2sTC8lF

In April, CWA members in more than 60 locations across the country participated in actions to support the bipartisan legislation designed to keep good jobs in the United States in the airline, telecommunications, healthcare, and other sectors. We’re working hard to pass this legislation. Read more: http://bit.ly/2tNuMR0

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