

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 3, 2008

COMMITTEES:  
ARMED SERVICES  
COMMERCE, SCIENCE AND  
TRANSPORTATION  
HOMELAND SECURITY  
AND GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS  
INDIAN AFFAIRS  
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING  
PERMANENT SUBCOMMITTEE  
ON INVESTIGATIONS

Tommie Hutto-Blake  
President  
Association of Professional Flight Attendants  
1004 West Eules Blvd.  
Eules, TX 76040

Dear Tommie:

It is my understanding that there some concerns within your union regarding the negotiated settlement between APFA and American Airlines with respect to the recall rights of American's furloughed flight attendants. I am writing to provide my perspective and hope to clear up any confusion with your members.

As you are well aware, the April 2001 merger of American Airlines and TWA proved to be a nightmare for thousands of flight attendants. The events of 9/11 led to widespread layoffs, and the five-year recall rights simply weren't enough to give these workers any hope of securing their jobs. At the same time, the federal government was providing millions of dollars in taxpayer-supported funding for American Airlines. It didn't seem fair to focus solely on the corporation, and not the workers who had put their lives on hold waiting for a recall. I promised during my 2006 Senate campaign that I would take every step to bring American and APFA together to reach an agreement that would extend the recall rights for these workers. After I was sworn in, I set about to do just that.

Additionally, from Washington I began an effort to pass legislation that would implement Allegheny-Mohawk labor protective processes for all future airline industry mergers. I am convinced that another wave of industry consolidation is on its way, and we simply cannot allow thousands of additional workers to find themselves stapled to the bottom of a seniority list. The Allegheny-Mohawk process will ensure that labor has a seat at the table if airlines merge, and that if a seniority agreement cannot be reached, a fair mediation process is guaranteed as a backup.

The Senate Commerce Committee in May 2007 amended the pending FAA Reauthorization bill with my legislation guaranteeing Allegheny-Mohawk protections. Working with Rep. Russ Carnahan, the House of Representatives in September 2007 passed a bill mandating Allegheny-Mohawk protections. In November, I became concerned that the underlying FAA Reauthorization bill would be stalled, however, and ultimately Sen. Kit Bond and I were able to attach Allegheny-Mohawk protections to a government spending bill signed into law late last month.

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It is important to note that adoption of Allegheny-Mohawk protections was never a question of “if” – it was simply a question of “when”. I was disappointed that you chose not to endorse my Allegheny-Mohawk legislation, despite my repeated requests. I remain convinced that this legislation will strengthen both the industry and its dedicated workforce.

The negotiations between APFA and American Airlines were difficult to jumpstart. The issue of furloughed workers had simmered for over five years, and both sides were reluctant to attempt to reach any agreement. As you recall, I spoke with both you and Gerard Arpey to advise that if my efforts at a voluntary agreement were not successful, I would seek a legislative solution – and could not guarantee that either side would be happy with the outcome. As a matter of simple fairness to the furloughed workers – as well as keeping my 2006 pledge – I was not going to take “no” for an answer from either side.

I was delighted that together, American Airlines and APFA reached an agreement that will extend the recall rights for the remaining furloughed flight attendants. Of course I would have preferred an agreement that would have covered all flight attendants, including those who have lost their recall rights, but the compromise agreement will finally provide relief for the most senior flight attendants still on the recall lists. I appreciate your role in ending a five-year ordeal for hundreds of your members.

I hope this letter will clear up any misconceptions, and urge you to share it with your members.

Sincerely,



Claire McCaskill  
Senator