

APFA President's Update – January 10, 2010

I'm Laura Glading, APFA President. This is a negotiations update.

We've had some negotiations sessions in December to establish protocol and get rid of all the loose ends before we start our intense negotiations in January.

The National Mediation Board has scheduled us for two weeks of intense "lockdown" negotiations, at the end of which we plan to either have a deal or go back to the National Mediation Board and ask for a release into a 30-day cooling off period.

When we resume in January, we will be negotiating the economic issues only. All of the other articles and all of the "underbrush"—if you will—have all been negotiated and TA'd off already. We have positioned ourselves very well to achieve a contract. Again, all we will be negotiating are the last economic issues.

[title] The APFA will send you a contract for ratification only if the TA recognizes the sacrifices you've made.

We will not be bringing a concessionary contract to the membership. If this contract does not reward the membership sacrifices, we will not be taking it out for ratification.

[title] What happens if APFA reaches a Tentative Agreement in January negotiations?

If we do achieve a contract in January, we will, as quickly as possible, be bringing that contract to the Executive Committee and have the Board members present. If the Executive Committee approves the contract to go out to the membership, we'll be sending it out for ratification.

[title] If the Tentative Agreement is approved to be sent to the membership for ratification, ALL members will be thoroughly briefed on its contents.

We'll then be going out and doing some road shows, visiting all the bases to explain what we've negotiated. We want to be sure that everybody knows exactly what they'll be voting on.

If we do not achieve a contract in January, we'll be going back to the National Mediation Board and asking for a release.

[title] What will the National Mediation Board do?

The National Mediation Board can do a number of things. They can offer binding arbitration, and if both parties agree, that's the direction we would take. If either party declines, then we could be released into a 30-day cooling off period.

[title] What happens during a 30-day cooling off period?
If the National Mediation Board releases us into a 30-day cooling off period, we could negotiate throughout those 30 days, at the end of which we could then be free to engage in self help.

Again, APFA feels as though we've positioned ourselves perfectly to get a contract in January and we're very confident. But if we do not achieve a contract, we will be sending out a strike balloting to the membership.

It is imperative that if we send out a strike ballot that every member vote. The more convinced the company is that we will do everything we can to get a contract, the more likely we will get a contract.

The APFA Board of Directors overwhelmingly voted "yes" to sending out a strike ballot at our meeting in November. A strike ballot authorizes the Board of Directors to take a vote on whether or not to give the President the authority to call a strike if necessary. This does not mean that we will definitely be going on strike. It's just giving the authority to call a strike if necessary.

The stronger our yes vote and the more the company is convinced that we will do what is needed to achieve a contract the more likely it is that we will get a contract.

Let me be clear: a strike is an absolute last resort. But I think this membership is ready to do whatever is needed to achieve a contract. We are hopeful that will happen by the end of January without even sending a strike ballot out.

I want to thank everybody for participating in the November 18th picketing events at the airports. It was a tremendous success. The company now believes that the Flight Attendants are willing to do whatever needs to be done. Up until this point we heard from the company continuously that they weren't sure that the Flight Attendants were behind the effort. They know and we know that you are.

Membership participation is vital. Everybody needs to be informed. Please call your chairpeople; volunteer; see how you can get involved; wear your pins and your disks; visit the website often; and listen to the HotLine. If you haven't signed up to receive the HotLine via email, please do so as soon as possible.

Negotiations and communication will be intensifying. Nobody can afford to sit on the sidelines. This is your contract and this is your agreement. We all need to participate, get behind the effort and get this thing done.

Please get your information through the APFA. Don't listen to rumors in the galley or rumors you may receive by email. There are many rumors out there; please get the facts. Passing misinformation can be very harmful.

Remember, we all have one goal and we only have one means of getting to that goal, and that is through a negotiated agreement. So let's all get behind the effort. And let's do it now.

The Negotiating Team has been working tirelessly to bring you a contract. And your overwhelming participation on November 18th and your overwhelming support has been a great inspiration. And we thank you. This has been a very difficult time for all of you. We know that. We are all going to get through this together.