

NEGOTIATE *and* Legislate

by Julie Frederick
Government Affairs Representative

While we remained tuned in, and in many ways frustrated at the pace of our contract negotiations, it is always important to remember that advances and improvements to our work life are often gained through the legislative process. We are entitled to have a safe place to work, reasonable working conditions, and even medical leave guarantees. This should not be part of the bargaining process. By taking these issues off the bargaining table our negotiators can focus on pay, benefits and work rule improvements that are typically accomplished through negotiation. The ban on smoking onboard airplanes, Flight Attendant Certification, increased penalties for interfering with the duties of a crewmember, and even improvements to the Family Medical Leave are just a few examples of successful lobbying efforts that resulted in legislation being signed into law.

APFA took a much greater role in the 2010 midterm elections by providing information to the membership on key races and candidates that supported issues important to our union. While supporting a particular candidate is always a personal choice, many of those who ran for office had clearly defined positions or voting records that reflected their support of APFA and Flight Attendants. Throughout the year, we have kept our elected officials advised on the status of our negotiations. Several members of Congress wrote letters to American Airlines CEO Gerard Arpey in support of APFA, asking him to bring our contract negotiations to a fair and equitable conclusion.

So where are we today?

The 112th Congress convened January 3, 2011. As expected, the 2010 election cycle resulted in significant changes to both the House of Representatives and the Senate membership. The Republicans now control the House while the Senate maintains a

Democratic majority. The majority party determines leadership positions. The new House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman is John Mica R-FL. Mica replaces James Oberstar D-MN who was not reelected. Chairman Mica brings experience in aviation issues and has promised swift passage of an FAA Reauthorization Bill, which may or may not contain key provisions that we have been advocating.

Where is the FAA Reauthorization Bill now?

The FAA Bill is also a funding bill, providing spending authority for the Airport and Airways Trust Fund, allowing the air traffic control system to operate. A series of extensions have been necessary since the last full FAA bill was passed in 2007. The latest extension, now the 17th, is set to expire March 31, 2011 and is meant as a stopgap measure and gives the 112th Congress an opportunity to introduce a new multiyear bill".

APFA intends to play a key role in making sure our interests are represented. The FAA Reauthorization Bill was introduced into the 112th Congress on January 27, 2011 by Sen. Jay Rockefeller D-VA. The language in the Senate version of the bill remains identical to the bill that was under consideration in the 111th Congress. Last week, newly elected Sen. Rand Paul R-KY introduced an amendment to strike OSHA protections from the current Senate FAA Bill. APFA has issued a "Call to Action" asking all APFA members, family, and friends to call and write your Senators urging them to keep OSHA protections that will provide basic health and safety standards for all people who work and travel on airplanes. Go to Capwiz or the APFA Facebook page to contact your Senator. Stay tuned for the latest information on the House FAA Bill!



APFA Government Affairs along with our Washington representative, Peter Goelz, will be identifying key officials to see in the 112th Congress. The new Congressional session began January 3, 2011 with many new faces. It is imperative that we remain visible while keeping our elected officials informed on the status of our contract negotiations. Other legislation we continue to monitor includes, flight attendant fatigue studies, sabotage, the ban of cell phone use on board aircraft, flight attendant security training, and carry on baggage. The Department of Transportation will be holding a joint labor/management meeting in 2011. In addition, we continue to press for joint consideration on any program that will be used in the airport screening of crewmembers.

Weekly updates on Government Affairs can be found on the APFA website. If you have an interest in working with the Government Affairs team or should you have any questions regarding legislation or Government Affairs, do not hesitate to contact legislation@apfa.org.

Mission Statement

The APFA Government Affairs Program aims to establish a relationship with members of Congress and their staff in order to educate them on the changing role and duties of American Airlines Flight Attendants, and to seek their support on legislative issues that are in the ongoing interests of the APFA membership. ▲