

American Airlines Sets Out its Case as it Enters Intense Negotiations with Flight Attendants

American Airlines and the Association of Professional Flight Attendants started two weeks of "lockdown" negotiations in hopes of wrapping up a new contract. The current one has been in effect for nearly seven years, and it became amendable May 1, 2008.

On Monday, American Airlines sent out a negotiations update that laid out its negotiating position for what's left. In doing so, it repeated its recurring theme in negotiations with the flight attendants, pilots, mechanics and other employees:

"We want to continue providing you with a good job that offers good pay and benefits. In order to do this, we need to maintain a competitive cost position within the industry because airlines that haven't paid attention to competitive costs have gone out of business like Eastern or Pan Am. That's why we'd like to look at productivity as a way to balance your goals with those of the company.

"The current structure of American's labor contracts has led to our workgroups trailing the industry in this area - a fact that isn't anyone's fault. When our biggest competitors cut their costs through bankruptcy, American was left with an uncompetitive contract and therefore uncompetitive labor costs. This is our current reality, and if we are to succeed as a company, we must continue to work creatively with APFA to find competitive solutions."

This is what American Airlines wants to get from the APFA:

- It wants to be able to schedule all flight attendants up to 95 hours a month (that's airline block hours, not actual time on duty, which is much more). Currently the limits are 77 hours on domestic and 82 hours on international.
- It wants to give more vacation to flight attendants who fly more hours. In other words, it wants to give less vacation to flight attendants who don't fly very much. It would result in more flight attendants who earn no vacation.
- The airline and flight attendants have agreed on a new reserve system, although it will take work from American's information technology people to make it function properly.

Although American and the APFA have agreements on most of the contract, the remaining ones are the tough ones: pay, expenses, vacations, hours of service, minimum pay and credit, scheduling, sick leave, health benefits, life insurance, pensions and length of the contract.

Socialism vs. Capitalism

We are hearing a lot of talk, about the United States becoming a Socialist Country, since the Democrats have the majority in the House and Senate. Are we? Below, are possible reasons why, the United States could never be a Socialist Country. Are we standing on the edge of the cliff, most people would say yes. I think what most people desire is responsible oversight by government not total government control, just something as a stop gap between full blown greed which Capitalism, tends to produce. This is just a thought from a fellow citizen

that's all. John Carlisle, TWU Publications Committee Co-Chair. The idea of a Marxist society is very alluring. In today's world of freedom and fairness, the notion of everyone being completely equal, even if this means taking from the rich and giving to the poor, seems just; however, the defect in Marxism is obvious. It is dependent on a type of human nature that is hard to come by. For Marxism to work, very little greed and jealousy can exist and people must have a general feeling of charity and a willingness to work their hardest for

the good of everyone. These are obviously not common traits. Marxism could also work if those who have the greatest abilities and those who work the hardest are satisfied with rewards equivalent to those with lesser abilities and those who don't work hard at all. This is also very unlikely. Marxism undoubtedly leads to free riding and slacking.

Source:

<http://www.fundamentalfinance.com/blogs/socialism-vs-capitalism.php>

Labor Chief Moves on Job Safety, Workers' Rights

Labor secretary works quickly to strengthen enforcement, raising concern among employers

Soon after she became the nation's labor secretary, Hilda Solis warned corporate America there was "a new sheriff in town." Less than a year into her tenure, that figurative badge of authority is unmistakable. Her aggressive moves to boost enforcement and crack down on businesses that violate workplace safety rules have sent employers scrambling to make sure they are following the rules. The changes are a departure from the policies of Solis' predecessor, Elaine Chao. They follow through on President Barack Obama's campaign promise to boost funding for the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, increase enforcement and safeguard workers in dangerous industries. Solis made a splash in October when OSHA slapped the largest fine in its history on oil giant BP PLC for failing to fix safety problems after a 2005 explosion at its Texas City refinery. Garnering less attention, she just finished hiring 250 new investigators to protect workers from being cheated out of wage and overtime pay. She also started a new program that scrutinizes business records to make sure worker injury and illness reports are accurate. And she is proposing new standards to protect workers from industrial dust explosions — an effort the Bush administration had long resisted. Some business groups say they prefer a more cooperative approach between government and businesses — what the Bush administration called "compliance assistance." "Our members are concerned that the department is shifting its focus from compliance assistance back to more of the 'gotcha' or aggressive enforcement

first approach," said Karen Harned, executive director of the National Federation of Independent Business' small business legal center. Other business leaders point out that the rate of workplace deaths and injuries actually fell to record lows in the previous administration, while the agency also helped employees collect a record amount of back pay for overtime and minimum wage violations. Chao has claimed that success was the result of cooperating with businesses to help them understand the myriad regulations. Keith Smith, a spokesman for the National Association of Manufacturers, said his members "want to build upon that progress and recognize what's working." But a November report from the Government Accountability Office suggested there is widespread underreporting of workplace safety issues. Investigators cited evidence that some employers pressure workers not to report illnesses and injuries and urged OSHA to be more aggressive in verifying business records. Labor Department spokesman Jaime Zapata said the idea of helping businesses understand the rules remains an important part of the agency's strategy, along with stepped-up enforcement. Solis plans to hire 100 new OSHA inspectors next year. "Compliance assistance was not a creation of the last administration," Zapata said. The changes have drawn praise from organized labor leaders who spent millions to help get Obama elected. Solis, a former California congresswoman and daughter of immigrant parents who were both union members, is a favorite of

labor unions and a longtime advocate for workers' rights. "We will not rest until the law is followed by every employer, and each worker is treated and compensated fairly," Solis said last month as she described a new national public awareness campaign to make sure workers know their rights on the job. The massive fine against BP certainly caught the public's attention, but other businesses are also paying a steep price for violating safety rules. Two months into the new fiscal year, OSHA has already cited six companies for "egregious" violations that carry the highest penalties. There were only four such egregious cases in all of the previous year. Solis said her agency this year will tackle 90 new rules and regulations next year. One change would give workers more information about how their pay is computed. Another would make employers disclose whether they sought advice from anti-union labor consultants. Glenn Spencer, executive director of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Workforce Freedom Initiative, said Solis so far has been willing to listen to some of his group's concerns. But he worries most about the possibility that Labor officials will try to revive costly ergonomics rules. Such rules would force businesses to redesign work spaces to protect employees from repetitive stress injuries. One of the first acts of the Bush administration was to rescind ergonomics rules that were passed in the Clinton administration. Solis supported the rules at the time, and has not spoken about plans to revive them.