



Dear flight attendant,

United and AFA negotiators met in New York the week of Dec. 9-13. Negotiations will continue Jan. 13-17 in Chicago.

United Labor Relations



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United's negotiating team met with the AFA joint negotiating committee in New York on December 9-13, 2013. We reached a tentative agreement on Jumpseat Authority, bringing the grand total—after almost a full year of bargaining—to four tentative agreements on relatively minor subjects. We have a long way to go, but at this point United has responded to, and is awaiting proposals from, AFA on all sections that have been under negotiations to date.

We also met separately with S-UA AFA representatives to discuss Inflight Services staffing plans and the voluntary furlough. We provided information about 2014 flying and the proper staffing for that flying. We discussed the fact that involuntary furloughs may be necessary if participation in the voluntary furlough is not sufficient to achieve the required staffing level. Unfortunately, S-UA AFA has chosen to distort the facts about flight attendant staffing and about their rejection of our offer of a “crossover” opportunity for S-UA flight attendants.

So let's set the record straight...

As everyone has recognized, since 2008 the S-UA flight attendant workgroup has been significantly over-staffed.

This is a structural over-staffing issue: it's not just the flavor of the year, and it's not—contrary to AFA's misrepresentations—caused by increased efficiency and productivity due to the new contract.

The main drivers for the overstaffing began with the grounding of the B737 fleet, changes in the post-merger redeployment of aircraft and flying, fleet modernization and the reduction of block hours in certain fleets. As a result, for the past several years we've had well over a thousand flight attendants on voluntary furlough at any given time.

In addition to the voluntary furlough program, United has tried to address this situation by offering an early-out (in conjunction with the 2012 Collective Bargaining Agreement), daily and monthly time off without pay, special leaves, and partnerships. We've also offered a number of voluntary "crossover" agreements that would allow S-UA flight attendants to voluntarily crossover to S-CO and maintain active employment. S-UA AFA only agreed to one of those offers (for 2012, as part of the new agreement), but has denied S-UA flight attendants the right to choose voluntary crossovers on three separate occasions—for 2011, 2013 and 2014.

By contrast, S-CO and S-CMI AFA leadership have repeatedly agreed to voluntary crossovers, recognizing that giving flight attendants the opportunity to choose is never a bad thing.

Now, having denied S-UA flight attendants the right to choose for themselves, S-UA AFA leaders have decided to shift the blame for structural over-staffing to the "productivity improvements" agreed to in the 2012 contract, and they claim that any involuntary furlough would be a violation of the contract. This is simply false, and we've demonstrated that to AFA. In fact, the long-term structural over-staffing problem and the need to adjust staffing for 2014 are not related to any productivity changes in the 2012 contract.

Of course, it's easy to take shots at management and to say (although obviously not true) that good employers never lay off workers. That may be the way to win union elections, but that's not the way to be honest with union members.

By denying S-UA flight attendants the choice to be actively employed, however, AFA's political posturing may come at the expense of United's flight attendants. That's just not right.