



Association of Professional Flight Attendants

Proudly Representing the Flight Attendants of American Airlines

Office of the National President

May 15, 2015

Dear Fellow Flight Attendant,

Last month, we marked another milestone in APFA's history – we now represent more than 25,000 Flight Attendants. In the course of just fourteen months, the merger and the continuing expansion of routes and frequencies have swelled our ranks by more than 50 percent. Also, last week a newly elected Board representing the combined bases met for the first time.

These changes offer APFA incredible opportunities – to realize the synergies from melding the cultures and experience of two different Flight Attendant workforces, to solidify the unity of our members, and to pursue our collective mission. At the same time, radical growth also presents real challenges – to listen and respond to the now even greater diversity of Flight Attendants' opinions, to reconcile and integrate these varied viewpoints, and to enhance our communications so that a workforce of this size understands the “how” and “why” in our decision-making.

A good start is to remind ourselves of the core elements that define our mission as a union:

- To enforce and uphold our collective bargaining agreement;
- To protect the safety and health of Flight Attendants; and
- To improve our work lives.

While we can agree that these are worthy goals, we will hear a wide range of opinions on priorities, strategies, and the use of resources. The hard part then, especially in the heat of a debate, is always to respect our distinct voices. In hindsight, there were things we could have done better.

Over the past seven years as President of APFA I've learned a lot – sometimes the hard way - about treating and responding to this diversity of opinion. To a large degree, it boils down to two well-established rules. First, listen; that requires appreciating our colleagues' perspectives and absorbing the import of their beliefs. Second, treat each other with dignity; that requires assuming each of us is spurred by pursuit of a shared mission and not by ill will.

I know that when these rules are not followed, others are invariably offended. I look back to the JCBA voting period as a particular time when I could have listened better. Immediately after the vote was announced, I began a Hotline with the statement that I was devastated by the results. I now understand why members may have thought this was insensitive to how the majority had voted. I was reacting not only to my having helped to negotiate the JCBA, but also to knowing that the 13 other members of the Joint Negotiating Committee had worked tirelessly to reach a contract that they all could endorse. And so my statement was not a response to the voice of the membership as it should have been, but perhaps to my own disappointment. Though in the same Hotline I urged all Flight Attendants to put aside their differences so that we could move forward, I understand that many had stopped reading after the first sentence.

I know that we must give Flight Attendants as many opportunities as possible to be heard. To that end, last month I started a series of “Listening Meetings” across the system, where the local leadership and I spend a day with Flight Attendants in crew ops. We have one reason to be there – to listen to the viewpoints and concerns of Flight Attendants.

We have come a very long way – from working for a decade under concessionary agreements, to facilitating the largest airline merger in history, to achieving a contract with the best pay rates and work rules in the industry. Now we have over 25,000 Flight Attendants and a newly elected Board. With dignity and unity as constants, we will do all that we can to carry out APFA's mission of enforcing and implementing the JCBA, protecting the safety and health of Flight Attendants, and improving our work lives.

In Unity,

Laura Glading
APFA National President

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