

Political / Legislative Policy Committee

Report to the AFA-CWA Board of Directors 2022

Introduction

The Political/Legislative Policy Committee welcomed new members, Rick Schwabauer (Hawaiian) and Cher Taylor (Frontier) and bid farewell to Bev Bullock (Alaska) and Ginny McDavid (United) in 2021. We continue to meet monthly via Zoom. We have been inviting the MEC Government Affairs Chairs to our monthly meetings in an effort to improve communication and bring them up to speed on what the committee is working on. This also provides a forum in which our MEC Chairs may bring forth issues/ideas and share their feedback with us. Discussions in our monthly meetings range from updates on current legislation, Flight PAC, elections, as well as various other topics.

AFA Victories in 2021/2022

In March of 2021 Congress passed the American Rescue Plan, marking the third extension of our Payroll Support Program for Flight Attendants and all aviation workers through September 30, 2021. This was another great victory for us and would not have been possible without the solidarity and activism of our Members. The Political/Legislative Policy Committee would like to send a sincere thank you to all of the government affairs activists that took time out of their days to volunteer to participate in daily briefings, virtual lobby visits with congressional staff, text banked, phone banked and never wavered in our shared goal of keeping airline workers connected to their paychecks/benefits and limiting job loss and financial devastation to our entire industry. Without all of you, this would not have been possible so thank you!

Another victory worth mentioning is one that happened on the state level in Illinois. The Illinois Sick Leave Act of 2017, which provided the ability to use sick leave to care for a family member or committed partner was passed with an unjust exemption for aviation workers. This is a common strategy that aviation corporations use to essentially “get around” laws that are favorable to workers. The fact that this happened on the state level is a good reminder to all of us that we need to be aware of what is happening in our state legislatures because their actions have consequences on our Members. Afa led the charge by partnering with other aviation unions and utilizing our relationships with the Illinois State Labor Federation to advocate for a fix to this draconian law and we were successful. Kudos to our AFA Illinois leadership, our countless volunteers and our International Vice-President, Deb Sutor who helped us achieve this victory!

One additional success story that also originates on a state level is the one of the California Governor’s Recall Election. Thanks to union activists who helped to beat back this futile, far-right, anti-worker attempt to steal the California Governorship one year before he was up for re-election, Governor Newsom was not recalled. A special thank you to those in California who partnered with their Labor Councils and CWA colleagues by participating in Labor to Neighbor walks, phone banks and text banks. We could not have done it without you!

FlightPAC Update

FlightPAC fundraising is an essential part of the work of the Government Affairs Committee. It goes hand in hand with the legislative work. FlightPAC is a non partisan political action committee (PAC) that fights solely for Flight Attendants’ political power. Voluntary contributions to the fund go towards campaigns and candidates that champion our issues. We may not all agree with how our system of government is set up and what it takes to get in the door. However, this is the system we have to work with and we must have a seat at the table so our voices are heard. What we can achieve through the legislative or regulatory arena, we take off of the negotiations table and are free to advocate for the many other issues we have to work on.

In 2021, CWA created a SIF to essentially build our PACs by creating strategic goals. The program consists of “Captains” in each sector who have been tasked with leading the effort to increase the PACs by amounts based on population. Rick Schwabauer (Hawaiian), Cher Taylor (Frontier), Jean Macheck (Endeavor) and Cole de Vault (Spirit) volunteered to be AFA’s Political Action Fund Captains (PAFs) and have done a wonderful job mentoring our Government Affairs Committees in this endeavor. The goal set for AFA was \$48,872.00. We are happy to report that AFA was one of the most successful in executing this goal. However, we still have strategic goals and there remains much work to do. **If your MEC Government Affairs Chairperson has not had the opportunity to connect with one of our PAF Captains, please do so as soon as possible.** We are all here to support you and eager to figure out how we can help you meet your goals.

An important reminder as negotiations come about is that the best way to facilitate an increase in your PAC is to make Dues Check Off a priority at the bargaining table. This is our most effective tool. Also, some helpful tips in increasing your PAC from those who have had much success are the following:

- Start with an audit of your Local Council Officers and volunteers and make sure they are all contributing.
- Circle back to those at your location who are already contributing and ask them to increase their contributions.
- Make sure there is a presentation and collection of new PAC forms at your new hire presentations.

Government Affairs Trainings

The United MEC Government Affairs Committee hosted a government affairs training via Zoom in February of this year. It was held on two separate days to accommodate as many trainees as possible and was opened up to other airlines wishing to attend. The training was structured for seasoned activists and topics covered ranged from an overview of the legislative process to the need for a focus on FlightPAC fundraising to a detailed lesson regarding elections and voting rights.

Several Councils have expressed a desire for a “Government Affairs 101” training. This could take the form of a Zoom meeting or in person depending on the state of covid. In addition, we are planning on hosting a Political Bootcamp in Chicago in June of this year to help equip our Activists with the tools they will need to Get the Vote out during the upcoming Midterm Elections. Please start thinking about who may be a good candidate for this important training and budget accordingly for sending them to Bootcamp in June.

Looking Forward

It is hard to believe we are once again approaching another FAA Reauthorization Act in 2023. The last FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018 was enacted during the 115th Congress and effectively reauthorized the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and other programs until the end of the fiscal year 2023. Historically, the FAA Reauthorization Act has provided a vehicle in which we have worked to attach many of our most important issues to.

However, if Congress flips and becomes less labor friendly we will all have to buckle up as it will be a bumpy ride. Why does it matter who is in the majority in Congress you may ask? The answer is that the party in the majority dictates who will be chairing the committees as well as who will be writing these bills. If the Republicans take the House, for example, Congressman Sam Graves of Missouri will be the likely chair of the Transportation and Infrastructure (T & I) Committee and be in charge of what the next FAA bill will look. Alternatively, if the Democrats are able to hang on to their majority in the House, the chair will likely be either Eleanor Holmes Norton (District of Columbia) or Rick Larsen (Washington) leading this important effort. As we have said many times before, elections have consequences and this is merely one example of why we work so hard to make sure those who support and advocate for our issues are elected/re-elected and why we need a strong PAC to keep them in office.

Regardless of the outcome of the 2022 Elections, we will be tasked with educating our newly elected leaders with the issues that are important to Flight Attendants as well as building relationships with their staff. As we have done in the past, we will plan on a Fly-In in January or February to complete these tasks. For planning purposes, please mark this on your calendar in early 2023 and budget accordingly.

GOTV 2022 & Midterm Elections

It is hard to believe we are once again gearing up for the Midterm Elections. The entire House (435 seats) as well as 34 seats in the Senate are up for election on November 8, 2022. It is also no secret that the far right has been chipping away at Voting Rights on the state level in an attempt to limit the ability for people to vote. In particular, politicians in 19 states across the country have engaged in voter suppression efforts to cut down on early voting as well as create other obstacles to voting. In response to these efforts, AFA's Political/Legislative Committee has created a subcommittee on Voting Rights to research changes in voting laws in the following states where many Flight Attendants reside: Florida, Texas, Georgia and Arizona. Special thanks to Bobbie Mas (United), Holly Forrest (Horizon) and Bruni Agosto (Hawaiian) who graciously volunteered their time to research the changes in voting rights in these four states and have compiled a report to assist in our Voter Registration and Getting Out the Vote efforts.

Now is the time to be formulating a Voter Registration plan that works for your location. Many primaries have already taken place and are now preparing for the General Election on November 8. In addition it is imperative that each and every Local Council is doing their part and is contributing in some way to the GOTV efforts. An excellent way to plug into your local network is to partner with your Local or State Labor Federation. They will have countless opportunities scheduled to join in with their Labor to Neighbor Walks, phone banking as well as other opportunities. Please do what you can to support your Local and MEC Government Affairs Committees in these endeavors. We will need "all hands on deck" for this election cycle. Don't forget that whoever is in the majority will be writing the next FAA Bill. The consequences of losing a flight attendant friendly majority in Congress would undoubtedly be devastating.

Conclusion

We would like to conclude our report with a sincere thank you to the members of the BOD, the countless Government Affairs Activists who continue to show up for us and do this critical work, to our International President Sara Nelson for her support and to our fearless leader, Government Affairs Director Steve Schembs who guides us and takes on the work of many on a daily basis. Government Affairs work is truly a labor of love and we are honored to serve on this committee and appreciate the opportunity given to us.

We remain available to assist and support you. Please reach out anytime if there is anything we can do to help support you and your MEC/Local Government Affairs Committees.

Respectfully submitted,

AFA Political/Legislative Committee,

Mary Garton, Jean Machek, Rick Schwabauer, Cher Taylor