

United and US Airways Flight Attendant Leaders Comment on Merger Reports

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In response to recent speculation regarding a merger between US Airways and United Airlines, the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA (AFA-CWA) Master Executive Council presidents at America West, US Airways and United, representing over 21,000 flight attendants, issued the following statement regarding the failed actions of the current management at each airline and the dangers of multiplying those failures by forcing them under one roof:

"Labor relations at our carriers is at an all-time low. US Airways CEO Doug Parker has failed for almost three years to negotiate a combined contract with the flight attendants at America West and US Airways. While executives have repeatedly awarded themselves millions in salary and bonuses, America West and US Airways flight attendants have not received raises or improvements in working conditions for nearly five years.

"The track record of United Airlines executives is no better. Last year, CEO Glenn Tilton awarded himself another 24 percent raise. And last week it was announced that UAL executives are seeking another bonus stock payout of eight million shares. Meanwhile, UAL management continues to make short-sighted decisions that leave no room for recovery when the airline is faced with weather delays or other common operational disturbances. These staffing cuts and scheduling practices provide no benefit and only wreak havoc on passengers' travel experience.

"In order for such an inherently risky and complex business transaction to be successful, there must be an underlying rationale and an accord with flight attendants. To date there is no evidence of either. If current management at these companies expects cooperation in any consolidation scenario, they must address the needs of flight attendants.

"The problems at our airlines can and should be fixed. Flight attendants continue to struggle under the draconian cuts of bankruptcy and deserve decent wages and work conditions. Only when the needs of the employees are met will US Airways and United Airlines have a chance at being airlines where people want to work and passengers want to fly.

"In order for any merger to be successful, it will need to have the support of flight attendants. We encourage our respective management teams to first address the problems that have created this adversarial labor environment before contemplating any kind of consolidation scenario. Unless immediate focus is placed on the outstanding road blocks to success at each of our airlines, flight attendant issues will become real and significant obstacles in the path of any merger."

Greg Davidowitch, Mike Flores, and Gary Richardson are AFA-CWA Presidents at United, US Airways and America West, respectively.

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