

...AFA's Sara Nelson

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nonunion and very much antiunion. So while we certainly support all the flight attendants there, it's good to send a message to management that you want to fly with union members. Union members are able to speak up at work when they see something they think isn't safe or isn't right for passengers.

The airline industry has been consolidating in the last few decades, and today four airlines control 69 percent of total market share. What does that mean for workers, and for passengers? Ironically, airlines have consolidated to cut capacity and be able to generate larger profit margins, but they have fought against sharing those profits with the workers. We've pushed back, and recently won contracts that have pushed careers forward. But Delta used consolidation to get rid of a major flight attendant contract — the contract for the flight attendants at Northwest. They ran a huge antiunion campaign and just barely turned out a vote that denied the flight attendants representation. Overnight they threw out 60 years of bargaining at Northwest Airlines.

AFA has a trademarked strike tactic - CHAOS - Create Havoc Around Our System™ in which flight attendants engage in intermittent strikes. Why hasn't it been used lately, and what would cause you to bring it back? Under the Rail-

way Labor Act, we have to go through a very laborious process to get to the point of having the right to strike. It's not like contracts that expire under the NLRA [*National Labor Relations Act is the law that spells out union rights for most private sector workers.*] Railway Labor Act contracts become "amendable," but they do not expire, and you have to go through an entire process that includes approval by the government to be able to set a strike deadline. So why hasn't CHAOS been used? Essentially because we haven't hit the legal end process to be able to use it. That doesn't mean we haven't threatened it. We've run strike votes and prepared the strike and used the threat of a strike and the power of solidarity that you can exhibit through informational picketing in order to get contracts. It's just been quite some time since any airline group has been given the legal right to strike.

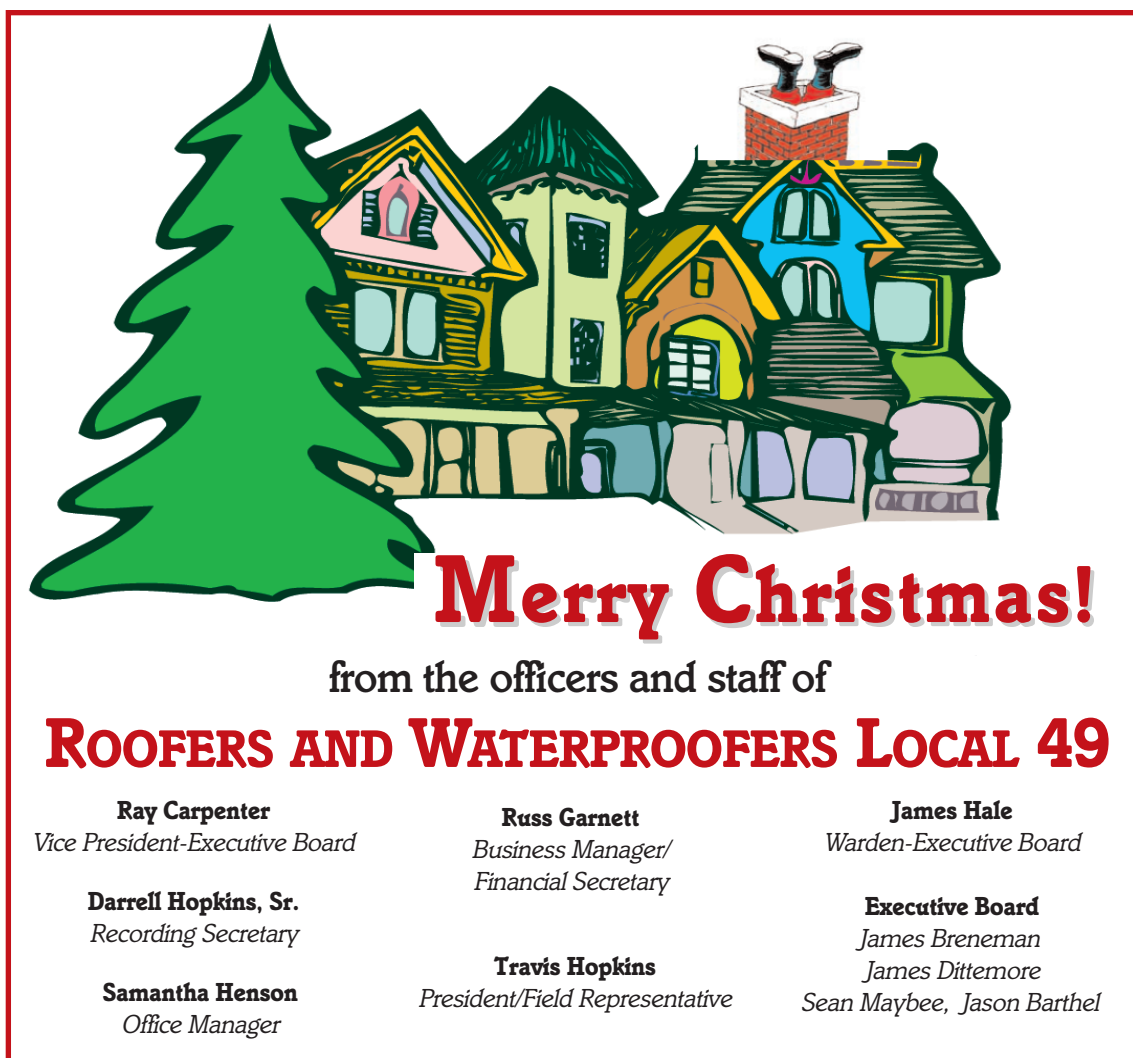
What's the main difference between airline unions and the kind of unions most of our readers would be familiar with, like public sector, building trades, manufacturing and grocery unions? In the past 20 years, contract bargaining has gone from an average of a year and a half time in length to five years. Obviously that's just unheard of in most industries, but that has become the new norm in the airline industry. Unions are pushing back against that. Part of it has just been that management has figured out that if

they delay at the table, there's no hard deadline.

To what extent are airline unions unified, or not? For example, flight attendants are represented by three unions — TWU, APFA, and AFA. We believe very strongly that we need to unite. We have a

public call for APFA [*the flight attendants union at American Airlines*] to merge with AFA, to build power for flight attendants there. We don't believe that there should be any groups that are out there standing alone or being in a position where they could be co-opted by company management. And so we have

made a very public call for our unions to merge. We think that's the only way forward. In terms of how are aviation unions working together today, I think that aviation unions are more united than they have ever been, and that has been because we have been taking on global attacks on our jobs and our rights.



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