

YOUR VOTE COUNTS

COUNTDOWN UNTIL CLOSE OF VOTING FOR THE NEW SIDE LETTER 10

September 2012

unity^{update}

YOUR MONTHLY UNITY SUPPLEMENT

SHOP STEWARD TRAINING 2012

TWU Local 556 is proud to welcome new Shop Stewards and returning veterans to the Shop Steward Committee.

On Monday, September 10, one hundred and sixty-two Shop Stewards were trained on their roles in advocating for our Membership. While the majority of their training focused on the Grievance process, they were also brought up to speed on current issues that are important to our Workgroup like supplemental insurance, current lounge education responsibilities, and what is happening with other workgroups that fall under the TWU umbrella at Southwest Airlines. The energy in the room was palpable and we have no doubt that our Membership will find them to be passionate to aid in any way that they can. You can meet your Shop Stewards on the Union website under "Committees".

They are excited to step up and advocate for the best Flight Attendants in the industry.



TWU556 CONNECT NOW AVAILABLE FOR ANDROID PHONES

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This could be our finest hour

Every airline is facing economic challenges today and Southwest Airlines is no exception. Approving Side Letter 10 will allow Southwest to secure international routes for future growth and expansion, an important step in keeping the Company profitable and our wages as Flight Attendants among the highest in the industry.

Thom McDaniel, your past TWU556 President, has very eloquently stated his opinion:

"In negotiating the first Side Letter 10, your Negotiating Team viewed that Side Letter as a transitional agreement to help us take advantage of the opportunities Overwater/Near International Flying would create for Southwest Airlines and our Membership. The agreement did not pass, but your Union returned to the table to address the perceived problems and reached a second Side Letter 10. While the side letter has significant changes, the overall goal has not changed. This is still a transitional agreement to address specific issues related to Overwater/Near International Flying.

There are changes in the new Side Letter that some perceive as concessions and there are also changes that are definite gains for our Members. As in any negotiation, neither side gets everything they want. The question each of us needs to ask ourselves is whether this agreement solves immediate challenges that need to be addressed to allow our Union and our Company to take advantage of the opportunities that this new type of flying brings and gain experience for upcoming full Contract Negotiations."

Just to be clear, this TA is for the Flight Attendants as well as Southwest Airlines. Although there may be actions at Headquarters that would indicate management style is changing, it is up to us to protect our beloved Southwest Airlines. We must keep the Spirit alive and press forward. We have THE INDUSTRY LEADING CONTRACT. The new Side Letter contains language that keeps our Contract, by far, above others. Do your homework Southwest Flight Attendants. We are a smart group of individuals. Please do not take personal posts on social media at face value.



And again, your Union has pulled out the fire extinguisher on social media. It has come to our attention that a Flight Attendant, who chooses to fly international flights, has posted a personal interpretation of “obstacles” on Facebook. It has been reposted and, in some cases, altered on some Southwest Group Facebook pages. Most of the author’s customs experience is thru Atlanta as this was the airport that the author was flying International Turns. What is said about the Proposed Near International/Overwater Flying agreement sounds sincere and credible; but the Union urges you to do your homework, ask questions, Google to find facts or call your Negotiating Team. The following is the Union’s clarification to some of the comments. Due to space restrictions, some of the Facebook comments have been copied from Facebook and further condensed.

COMMENTS MADE ON FACEBOOK PAGES (<i>SIC</i>)	YOUR NEGOTIATING TEAM COMMENTS
However, there are unique and specific issues and requirements to working these flights that I do not think anyone really gave a thought about when putting together your TA, that will have very significant and long term effects on us all for some time. My motivation here is to offer our experience and perspective to you to use as a tool to make an informed decision for yourselves, and...don't forget...us too! You are making an extremely important decision that will effect you, the company as a whole, and the 1600+ Flight Attendants who will be transitioning over. Its a really BIG moment for SWA, and for you! I encourage you to ASK QUESTIONS and make a truly INFORMED decision! Talk to your AirTran family! We will be more than happy to help in any way we can."	Just because something is not mentioned in the Tentative Agreement does not mean that it was not discussed by both sides at the Negotiating Table. The Union has not been contacted by anyone asking what we actually discussed at the Negotiating Table. Instead, assumptions are being made. We encourage you to call your Negotiating Team to ask any questions, we have received very few calls. While social media may seem useful, it leaves out many important details that can only be provided by your Negotiating Team. Feel free to call the Union Office to speak to one of your Negotiators to get a full/detailed explanation of the Tentative Agreement: (800) 969-7932.
One of the really big errors is the amount of time you are being given to clear customs. I have been flying intl for years and have NEVER cleared customs in under 30-45 min.. EVER. . You will need 15 min just to get from the plane to the customs checkpoint. And if you arrive in places like ATL, BWI, we regularly get in at the same time as British Airways, (9-14 crew), Korean Air (upwards of 21crew) etc. You will be absolutely stuck in customs for no less than 60-90 minutes.in short, there's is NO PREDICTING how long it will take, or not! Here is where y'all need to be very very careful and make sure you have adequate time allowed, and specific language in place to protect yourselves. I, personally, (and this is only my opinion from my experience working these flights, nothing more...not trying to start anything here) would absolutely be against anything in my contract that would give me NO LESS than 45 minutes after block in to clear customs. No Less.	Even when Flight Attendants use designated “crew lines”, it may take more than “15 minutes to clear customs”; however, did you know that the previous (failed) TA and our current Contract does not provide ANY debrief time on an RON? In this TA, your Negotiating Team was able to get our “foot in the door” and better position ourselves for the next contract negotiations. In addition, your Negotiating Team preserved our INDUSTRY LEADING 10 ½ DUTY DAY for International Flying. We had originally asked for a 30-minute debrief period like the Pilots; however, we settled for 15 minutes. As it currently stands, with the 45-minute report time prior to RR flights and 15-minute debrief to clear customs after RR flights, we CUT DOWN THE TIME WE CAN BE SCHEDULED TO WORK TO 9 ½ HOURS BLOCK-TO-BLOCK (we can currently work up to 10 hours block-to-block domestically). Adding additional “report” or “debrief” time into our current 10 ½ hour duty day would compromise the productivity of pairings containing international/regulatory requirement flights.
And ABSOLUTELY make sure you have a crew meal provision!! You will not be able to pack any of your own food on INTL flights! (well, you can pack some things...but it's mostly nothing you want to eat. Lol). The crew meal issue is VERY IMPORTANT. It must be in the original packaging or it will be discarded as you enter US Customs and there could possibly be a personal fine for the infraction . For the most part, we leave our lunch boxes and food in the US at the departing station, for pick up when we return. Crew meals aren't always exactly what you would pack for yourselves to eat, but on a long day of CUN turns, they are very much appreciated by the crews. AT pilots had their union put specific wording in their agreement to address crew meals, and the F/A's fell under the "me too" clause. I know you are all planning to address this at a later point....but I cannot emphasize the need to protect yourselves and make sure you all get what you need on these flights.	The Tentative Agreement already contains a “Meal Availability” provision. If the reference to the crew meals that AirTran currently provides to their Crew Members, your Negotiating Team already considered, surveyed, and educated our Members on this very issue. AirTran currently provides crew meals by having a “box” delivered to the aircraft (at the domestic departure city in the US) that contains five crew meals: wraps/sandwiches containing lunchmeat and a salad supplemented with a packaged snack, usually chips or cookies. This box currently costs AirTran (Southwest) \$150 with a large portion being “delivery charges”. When given the choice between receiving a crew meal “in this fashion” or “more per diem” so the Flight Attendant could choose/buy what they want themselves, our Flight Attendants chose an “increase in per diem” by a large majority. For more info visit www.aphis.usda.gov/favir.

One of the biggest things you will be responsible for is the INTL paperwork. You will be given a "Gen Dec" which is a general declaration from customs with specific crew and flight information outbound, along with other (easy to do) paperwork. You will get this stuff easily and quickly...do not fear it. It's no problem as long as you pay attention to detail. :) You will be required to pass out immigration and customs forms on each flight. This process always takes a little while, as the pax NEVER fill out the forms correctly...no matter how many times you tell them to please take their time and fill them out carefully. Most destinations you will have plenty of forms, other times you will have *literally* just enough, and if anyone makes an error...you can't replace the forms. Some forms are one-per-person, some are head-of-household, etc. you will need to familiarize yourselves with the forms. You will spend A LOT of time answering questions and form related duties. As a rule, I am very specific that the crew are NOT customs officers...we only provide the forms. If you have a question I can't answer, I tell them to leave it blank and ask customs on arrival.	Because of the additional duties imposed upon the "A" Flight Attendant, your Negotiating Team was able to secure an additional dollar, for a total of \$3, for Flight Attendants when flying in the "A" position on Regulatory Requirements flights. Flight Attendants are not required to make sure that Passengers properly fill out their immigration forms, although, let us never forget our POS, and go that extra mile anytime we are able. Also, until recently, AirTran never had a LODO (language speaker) program. Your Negotiating Team was able to negotiate language for a LODO subcommittee to be formed, which will decide which flights need to be staffed with a LODO speaker. One of the duties of a LODO speaker is to answer questions for passengers who do not speak English.
Please, my beloved SWA family.....read that letter CAREFULLY! Talk to your AirTran family who can tell you what you need to know about INTL flying. I would be very very reluctant to sign that letter until some of the issues contained inside were revised to be more realistic.	It is good to hear that some of our AirTran family are here to help answer questions about international flying, but please keep in mind that AirTran Flight Attendants do not work under our current Contract, nor are they familiar with our Contract and its terminology.
You need to be aware that all planes in Montego Bay Jamaica are sprayed with harsh (and nasty) pesticides prior to boarding. You are not allowed to leave the aircraft, so you must stay aboard while they do this! It's NASTY! There are so many things like this that are routine to international flying that are not being addressed! Please review your letter carefully! :). (((hugs and luv))). :) There are some issues that are station specific. Earlier I talked about MJB (Montego Bay, Jamaica). Every flight there, the cabin is completely sprayed with pesticide. We have been told the chemicals are "harmless". (yeah...my eyes water and I gag and cough for the next 12 hours). For a long time we were REQUIRED to remain on board the plane. Period. If we stepped off, that would require us to leave the plane...clear customs...security...blah, blah, blah...delaying the flight upwards of an hour or more. Yeah. We sat in that cabin while they sprayed pesticides gagging us. AFA, finally after pushing the issue, secured us permission to step off the a/c onto the jet bridge while the spraying is happening. Still...the pesticide is nasty. You will not enjoy boarding the plane after this happens. Once the door is closed and the air starts to cycle it gets better. This was never addressed anywhere in our contract and took some time to correct. Please make sure you protect yourselves from the first flight out!	The reference to "disinsection" or the spraying of insecticides, usually pyrethrins or pyrethroids, in various areas of the aircraft that has been in place for many years in various parts of the world—long before AirTran ever existed as an airline. Your Negotiating Team did its research and is fully aware of the use of residual pesticides, which are also required in Australia, Barbados, Fiji, New Zealand, and Panama. This procedure, which is intended to prevent the transmission of disease by insects, has been deemed a necessary public health measure in many International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) contracting states. Flight Attendant unions and safety committees are continually scrutinizing and monitoring the spraying (and rightfully so); however, the scientific community usually considers the use of these particular insecticides safe for human health. Despite what was said, AirTran Flight Attendants ARE NOT REQUIRED to stay onboard when the spraying takes place. Other than walking off the aircraft before spraying, you cannot "protect yourself" or "stop" the required spraying of insecticides when it's required by the country you are flying into. If you have a serious reaction to the spraying of insecticides, you will be encouraged to "not bid" or "trade" into these flights. If you have pulmonary disease or a medically documented sensitivity to the sprayed chemicals, Southwest will accommodate these individuals on a case-by-case basis.
Some more food for thought....your cell phones will not work or will be international roaming at most all INTL destinations. You can easily pay \$3-7 per minute if you have to call scheduling or inflight. We must submit expense reports for these calls, and it can take forever to be compensated.	When you are flying domestically or internationally, it is Scheduling's responsibility to contact you for changes in assignment. If you do have the need to contact Scheduling or if you answer a phone call from Scheduling when traveling internationally, the TA contains language to reimburse phone calls to/from Scheduling.
Catering is something you need to think about. Or "Provo" in your case. At AirTran we carry all our ice in a big cooler in the cargo bay outbound for the return trip. We NEVER use ice from an INTL station. Usually the station will bring the ice up from the cargo bay when trash is removed.	Good to know, and as always, provisioning ice is not the responsibility of Flight Attendants.

As to your SWA specific duty day times, and layovers, etc. I don't know enough about that to offer any comment. That's entirely y'all. Lol. I just wanted to bring up some of the things you don't know about, that we have had to work the kinks out of over on the AirTran side. I don't want to see y'all lock something in place we all will have to live with for years, that could have been avoided or addressed by just simply talking to us and asking what are one of the issues we had pop up on us and needed to fix.	There were many conversations that your Negotiating Team had with AirTran and nine other Flight Attendant Unions that fly internationally, including Alaska Airlines, America West, American Airlines, Continental Airlines, Delta Airlines, Frontier, Spirit, United, and US Air. In the end, your Negotiating Team prioritized the top issues related to international flying and is proud to deliver you industry-leading contract language for international flying including, but not limited to, Daily Pay Guarantees, Duty Day protections, Safety, Security, Healthcare, Red Eye Flying, and Passport Policies. KEEP IN MIND - Section 6 Contract Negotiations begin in less than a year. Approving this Side Letter allows SWA to move forward, it also - once again - features industry leading contract for international and overwater flying.
When you layover intl...there is no one there to assist you with finding your ground transportation, and providing an English language speaker. It took our union forever to have the company address these problems!	Because AirTran's limited international operations were (and still are) "turnarounds" it was unusual for Flight Attendants to have overnights in an international destination. Because of this, finding the crew van, or someone that speaks English for that matter, was an issue and AirTran's Flight Attendant Union had to negotiate language to ensure that these problems would be rectified. This is no longer a problem for AirTran Flight Attendants.
Regarding the following comments posted, there is no contract language that can be negotiated to "protect" Southwest Flight Attendants. These are Regulatory Requirements that neither Southwest Airlines nor TWU Local 556 has any authority.	
If you have an unscheduled plane swap intl...(which I did in Cancun 2 months ago). You will need to clear customs...leave the airport....come back in...clear security...and all that takes no less than 60-90 minutes. None of these issues are addressed clearly and adequately.. These things happen all the time. Any time you are intl....all the rules and time needed change! Please protect yourselves!!	There is no contract language that can "negotiate" airline crew members out of abiding by Regulatory Requirements. If, due to irregular operations, a crew is required to exit and enter customs in order to work another flight, then that is what they have to do. If unscheduled plane swaps at international destinations are something that you just can not deal with—you are encouraged to "bid out of" pairings with international flights.
On arrival at either INTL or back in the US...ALL DOORS EXCEPT THE MAIN CABIN DOOR MUST REMAIN CLOSED until customs says its ok to open them. In Mexico, the cleaning team comes aboard the plane from the back L2 door from air stairs. I always make sure to call up front and check to see if customs has given us the ok? This can be a very big deal and will cause all kinds of unpleasant (re: police and customs) issues if you are not careful....again attention to detail is required.	Good to know, but it is a necessary policy/procedure when traveling internationally; does not have anything to do with our Contract (or this TA). Simply stated, this issue will be handled through Management's prescribed operating procedures that will be approved by the regulating authorities. Flight Attendants only have to follow such procedures to protect themselves from punitive culpability.
Prior to landing at an international station, all of your carts, galley areas, etc with alcohol must be completely sealed and remain so until you depart and clear 10,000ft. The customs agents at the various stations can be random! Sometimes they will pull out the carts / check the galley to be sure it is sealed...sometimes not. I think there is a fine if the customs procedures are not followed correctly.. We as a rule, just seal EVERYTHING. Doesn't take but a minute, and that way we are covered regardless.	The reference to "bonded liquor," is a requirement that liquor not be opened/sold until the 10,000 feet mark. This is a necessary policy/procedure when traveling internationally; does not have anything to do with our Contract (or this TA). Again, this issue will be handled through Management's prescribed operating procedures that will be approved by the regulating authorities. Flight Attendants only have to follow such procedures to protect themselves from punitive culpability.



Unity and Unity Update are official publications of Transport Workers Union Local 556, representing the Flight Attendants of Southwest Airlines.

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