

AFA vs IAM

A comparison for flight attendants at Continental and United Airlines

Soon, we flight attendants at the combined United Airlines will vote to determine which union will represent us. It is an important decision -- one that will impact nearly every aspect of our jobs and quality of life, until and beyond retirement. There is a lot of information and opinion out there already (much of it disorganized, exaggerated, or inaccurate)-- making it difficult to determine what's true; making it more likely that many will tune out and not engage or vote. Both unions have begun election campaigns, adding to the noise level. The following is an attempt to distil the most relevant information (drawn from both unions and other sources) into a format that is concise, objective, and easy to understand -- that we may all cast an informed vote.

Note: This version includes information from the recent CBA passed at OCO. Changes are hi-lighted.

The Merger Process

Since it was first announced, in May of 2010, the merger of Continental and United has been on a fast track to completion. AFA recently began the process leading to a representation election by filing an Application for Investigation of a Representation Dispute with the National Mediation Board (NMB). Before it will conduct an election the NMB must first determine that the two carriers are merged enough to meet their definition of a “single carrier”*. The timing and exact requirements for this determination are not set in stone. Among the possible criteria the NMB considers are:

- Published combined schedules or routes
- Standardized uniforms
- Integrated essential operations, such as scheduling or dispatching
- Common marketing, markings, or insignia
- Centralized labor and personnel operations
- Combined or common management and corporate officers and board of directors
- Combined workforce
- Common or overlapping ownership

If and when the NMB decides that the new United fits their definition of a “single carrier” they will act on the application, and conduct a representation election to determine which, if any, union will represent the flight attendants.

*Note that the NMB “single carrier” determination is different from the process for obtaining a “single operating certificate”, governed by the FAA.

About the election

Once an election is called it will be governed and administered entirely by the NMB. Here are a few facts about the election:

- All flight attendants, regardless of work status or union standing are eligible to vote.
- Voting information will be sent to the home address on file with your airline, so make sure your company has your current address (FDUG for UA f/as, ‘All About Me’ for CO f/as).
- There will likely be three choices on the ballot: AFA, IAM, and No Representation.
- The NMB typically uses electronic balloting.
- The winner will be chosen by simple majority* of the votes actually cast.

*to win by simple majority a candidate must receive over 50% of all valid votes actually cast. If there is no clear winner the NMB will likely hold a run-off election.

After the election

The union that wins the election will be responsible for administering both pre-merger contracts separately for each group until a single merged contract is negotiated. CO and UA f/as will continue to work under their current contracts and pay scales until a merged contract is in place.

If the “no union” choice wins, both unions are off the property, both contracts become null and void, and the company will dictate work rules and pay scales.

Merging Seniority

One of the more important things the surviving union will do, as far as we are concerned, is to determine how the seniorities of the two populations of flight attendant will be integrated.

- The representatives of each airline are currently reviewing the specific conditions associated with each flight attendant’s seniority date (including former seniority arbitration awards, leave of absence seniority adjustments, conditions for the trigger of seniority accrual, etc.), and will form a pre-merger seniority list.
- The merger committees will notify each flight attendant at their respective carriers by certified mail of her/his pre-merger seniority date. Each flight attendant will have an opportunity to question the results.

- The surviving union will determine whether integration of the two lists will be by objective seniority (such as date of hire (DOH)) or some other scheme (such as “one for one”). AFA is committed to DOH by their Constitution and Bylaws. IAM has informally declared a commitment to “date of entry” (DOE).
- Differences in seniority calculation between the two carriers, such as whether or not time spent in initial training is included, will be decided and applied. Such adjustments cannot result in a flight attendant changing relative seniority positions on her/his own (pre-merger) seniority list (i.e.: no one will “leap frog” over someone on their own list as a result of adjustments made between the lists). The individual effects of furloughs, leaves of absence, mergers and other factors remain in place for both groups in the seniority merger process.
- Once any necessary corrections and adjustments are made each flight attendant’s bidding seniority is finalized and the seniority lists are then merged into one combined list, which is then certified.

A certified merged seniority list is important to the company as well, since they will need it to be able to merge the operations once the FAA issues the single operating certificate. The seniority list is something the union can withhold to apply pressure on the company to commit to settling the merged contract.

Contract Comparison

Contracts can be difficult to compare, especially the non-economic aspects. The best one can do is to find similar provisions to compare, and then consider the contracts again in their entirety to form a full opinion. The comparisons that follow are drawn from both IAM and AFA workups, and directly from the respective contracts. In most cases the information is abbreviated and incomplete, for expediency and to limit the size of this document. When in doubt please refer directly to the contracts.

It is important to remember that no matter which union prevails we will have to work together to combine the best of both contracts into one merged contract.

Pay

Of course, the first thing we all focus on is hourly pay. It is the easiest to understand and compare, but one must look further than just the top wage to make a meaningful comparison.

Pay falls into two categories, flight pay and other smaller components that may not seem like much individually, but can add up to make a substantial difference in one’s paycheck.

Current Hourly Flight Pay Scales

Year	UA domestic	UA international	CO domestic ¹	CO international ²	CO incentive ³
1	\$18.46	\$19.00	\$19.99	\$20.99	\$24.99
2	\$19.51	\$20.06	\$23.35	\$24.35	\$28.35
3	\$20.75	\$21.31	\$24.66	\$25.66	\$29.66
4	\$21.34	\$21.89	\$26.60	\$27.60	\$31.60
5	\$24.20	\$24.74	\$28.54	\$29.54	\$33.54
6	\$31.82	\$35.42	\$33.11	\$34.11	\$38.11
7	\$33.54	\$37.11	\$35.18	\$36.18	\$40.18
8	\$34.37	\$37.86	\$37.08	\$38.08	\$42.08
9	\$35.49	\$39.11	\$38.48	\$39.48	\$43.48
10	\$36.63	\$39.88	\$40.43	\$41.43	\$45.43
11	\$37.42	\$40.77	\$41.67	\$42.67	\$46.67
12	\$38.31	\$41.78	\$43.74	\$44.74	\$48.74
13	\$39.14	\$42.57	\$45.38	\$46.38	\$50.38
14	\$39.75	\$43.14	\$47.27	\$48.27	\$52.27
15			\$49.35	\$50.35	\$54.35
16			\$51.25	\$52.25	\$56.25

¹ CO pay rates reflect a 2.5% raise gained in the agreement ratified in February of 2011. A second 2.5% raise becomes effective in September of 2011.

²The CO international rate is the domestic rate plus a \$1 override, which is not guaranteed.

³The CO Incentive rate is the domestic rate plus \$5, limited to hours in excess of 225 to maximums of 330 per quarter and 110 per bid month (a maximum possible value of \$525 per quarter).

Other Pay Components

	UA	CO
Domestic Per Diem	\$1.50	\$1.95
International Per Diem	\$1.75	\$2.50
Holiday Pay	5 days per year (incl. birthday) Pay formula: hourly rate, x credited time for trip, divided by total time away, x hours away on actual holiday.	None
Critical Coverage Pay/ "White Flag" Pay	Lineholders and reserves who pick up trips on days during periods of declared critical coverage will be paid 1-1/2 times their hourly compensation for the trip.	Flight attendants who pick up trips on days company has designated low coverage ("White Flag") days will be paid 150% of base rate for the trip. The provision does not specify if reserves are eligible.
Night/Starlight Pay	\$0.35/hr	\$0.50/hr
Understaffing/Short Crew Pay ¹	On any aircraft: \$5/hr, x number of missing crew.	On a/c with more than 160 seats: \$48.15/hr x number of missing crew, divided equally among remaining crew members.
Language Pay	\$1.54/hr	\$2.50/hr
Reserve Override	\$1.93 per credited hour	None
Holding Pay	½ hourly wage rate after 10 minutes	\$15/hr after 30 minutes
Training Pay	\$9/hr, 1 hour minimum for up to 3 trainings, then 3 hours minimum	2.5 hours pay per day
Galley Pay	\$.97/hr on 747 a/c with 24 or more first class seats	\$1.00/hr on 757 and widebody a/c, on international flights, except to/from Canada and Mexico.
Drug/Alcohol Testing Pay	Duty time extended 15 minutes	\$20
Out of Base Parking	\$25/month	\$30/month
Health Insurance	Contractual, comprehensive and well defined. May not be altered outside of negotiations with the union	Contractual (side-letter) states health insurance is per company policy ²
Profit Sharing	Contractual	Per CO company policy. Effective January of 2011.
Defined Pension Plan	Replaced by PBGC plan and defined contribution plan (see 401k)	Continental Airlines Retirement Plan (CARP). If plan is terminated or frozen, new plan to be started under the IAM National Pension Plan ³
401k	Administered by Fidelity 3% company contribution 3% company match	Administered by Charles Schwab No company match or contribution until September of 2012. Up to a 3% match thereafter.
Retirement Health Insurance	Post funded No age limit	Post funded Limited to age 65 Remaining sick hours at retirement may be used toward premiums

¹ Example assuming an a/c with 11 f/as standard, short staffed by one (10 remaining), and 20 hours flt time: UA pays \$100, CO pays \$96.30, to each working f/a for the trip.

² UA f/as have two options; a PPO or free HMO. CO f/as have several plan levels to choose from. HMOs are not free. CO f/as pay nearly twice what OU f/as pay for the same coverage. CO management can make unilateral changes to options and costs at anytime, within limits set by side letter, without concurrence from the union.

³ CARP is currently underfunded by \$1.5 billion.

Work Rules

Work rules are tougher to compare than wages, but in our jobs they can have a significant effect on net income and quality of life. There are essentially four kinds of work rules: pay guarantees, limits to the length of a work day, time off guarantees, and provisions for schedule flexibility. There are also sets of rules geared toward specific groups, such as reserves.

General Rules

	UA	CO
Minimum Days Off (line holder)	10	8
Loss of Days Off (line holder)	If involuntary reduction below minimum, day off conditionally restored without loss of line guarantee.	For any involuntary loss of day off f/a has the option of restoring the day off without loss of line guarantee or receiving 5 hrs pay for each day lost.
Reassignment	Reassignment must return flight attendant to home domicile no more than 24 hours after scheduled return of original ID, 36 hours if originally an international ID over 4 days.	Reassignments lapsing 4 or more hours into a scheduled day off are considered a loss of a day off. If reassigned to a domestic trip, f/a will be paid an additional \$15 per hour for time on duty beyond two hours after the scheduled arrival time of the original trip lost.
Duty Rig	1 hr pay for every 2 hrs on duty	None
Trip Rig	1 hr pay for every 3.5 hrs away from home	1 hr pay for every 4 hrs away from home, on trips with scheduled rest period over 29 hours
Duty Period Credit	Minimum average of 5 hrs pay per duty period	None
Domestic Duty Time Max	13 hrs scheduled 14.5 hrs actual Duty starting between 1900 – 0459: 11.5 scheduled 13 hrs actual	14 hrs scheduled 16 hrs actual
International Duty Time Max	0-8 hrs flt time: 13 hrs scheduled, 15 hrs max 8-12 hrs flt time: 14.5 hrs actual, 16.5 hrs max Over 12 hrs flt time: actual may exceed scheduled by 3 hrs	16 hrs scheduled, 17.5 hrs actual Over 12 hrs flt time, actual may exceed scheduled by 3.5 hrs. In irregular ops, may be required to exceed duty time limits to dhd for rest.
Line/Trip Guarantee ¹	Conditional	Conditional
Lineholder Guarantee	65 hrs	70 hrs
Max Scheduled Line Hours Allowed on a Monthly/Quarterly Basis	84 hours average per domicile	92:30/mo domestic, 95:00/mo international (company allowed to build 20% of lines to 3% over max)
Max Hour Limits	92/184/261 Can be increased to 97/194/276 or 100/200/300 at f/a's discretion	No Limits
Other Legalities	24-in-7 (FAA mandated) 1-in-7 ² 8-in-24 (domestic only) 30-in-7 (can be waived by f/a)	24-in-7 (FAA mandated)
Minimum Legal Rest on Domestic Layover	9 hrs rest, free from duty (ffd), where lodging within 15 min, otherwise 11 hrs	0-14 hrs duty = 9 hrs rest, block to block (btb) 14-16 hrs duty = 12 hrs rest btb, 10 hrs if next rest is 14 hrs

Minimum Legal Rest on International Layover	0-8 hrs flt time = 10 hrs rest 8-10 hrs flt time = 18 hrs rest 10-14 hrs flt time = 22 hrs rest over 14 hrs flt time = 33 hrs rest from US to Japan = 22 hrs rest (Rest times listed are btb. Subtract 2 hrs for at-lodging minimums.)	Same as domestic
Minimum Legal Rest at Home After Domestic Trip	10 hrs rest ffd	0-14 hrs duty = 10 hrs rest btb 14-16 hrs duty = 12 hrs rest btb, 10 hrs if next rest is 14 hrs
Minimum Legal Rest at Home After International Trip	0-8 hrs flt time = 11 hrs rest ffd 8-10 hrs flt time = 24 hrs rest ffd Over 10 hrs flt time = 36 hrs rest ffd	Same as domestic
Onboard Rest	8-12 hrs flt time = 1 hr minimum Over 12 hrs flt time = 2 hrs minimum Bunks, curtained, and/or “sleeperette” seats specified.	8-12 hrs flt time = 1 hr minimum Over 12 hrs flt time = 2 hrs minimum Coach seats specified. Bunk modules to be installed on B777/B787
Other	Max 8 segments per duty period	

¹ Regarding trips lost due to cancellation or other operational causes: at CO an f/a can lose line/trip guaranteed pay only if they elect to make up lost time with a lesser trip on days off or decline to remain subject to reassignment (with the exception of the last seven days of the month, when the guarantee is unconditional (overs)). At UA an f/a can lose line guaranteed pay only if they decline a reassignment.

² For international flying: must have either 24-in-7 away or 1-in-7 at home.

Reserve

Being on reserve is a different work experience from holding a line. Things most people take for granted (such as being reasonably sure when and how long you will next be able to sleep) are often luxuries for a reserve. Because of this both contracts have provisions negotiated specifically for reserves.

Reserve Rules

	UA	CO
Reserve System	Maximum 5 years straight, then every other month (A/B rotation) Top 25% of base exempted	Straight reserve until senior enough, within base, to hold a line
Reserve Override	\$1.93/hr	None
Reserve Line Guarantee	75 hrs	83 hrs
Minimum Days Off Guarantee	11	10
Loss of or Changes to Days Off	Reserve flown into days off will have days off restored. Company cannot unilaterally move days off.	Reserve flown into days off will have days off restored. Company can move, or “roll”, days off, except for one set of 4 days off designated “immoveable” by the reserve f/a.
Minimum Notice of Assignment	4 hrs before departure	2 hrs before check-in
Conversions	No limit on conversions from call-in to ready reserve	Call out reserves can only be converted to ready 3 times per month. All reserves converted to Ready first 3 days of bid period and on holidays. If a Call out reserve fails to call the VRS (automated voice response system) between 2000 and 2400 prior to a day on they are converted to Ready status for the remaining block of reserve days. If on flight duty during that time, they must call in on block-in.
Call Out/Show-no-go Pay	2 hrs	2 hrs
Reserve Status Ratio	Minimum 65% Call-in	Minimum 50% Call-out

Picking Up Flying	On days off	On days on if otherwise unassigned
Legal Rest at Home After Domestic Trip	12 hrs ffd If flown over 8-in-24, minimum 16 hrs rest ffd	11 hrs btb 12 hrs btb after 14-16 hrs duty, except if next rest is 14 hrs, then 10hrs btb
Legal Rest at Home After International Trip	0-8 hrs flt time = 12-24 hrs rest, depending on length of next trip 8-10 hrs flt time = 24 hrs rest 10-12 hrs flt time = 36 hrs rest Over 12 hrs flt time = 48 hrs rest	Same as Domestic Except if non-stop flt over 12 hrs then the greater of 16hrs or rest of day.
Airport Standby/Alert	Scheduled 4 hrs Can be assigned trip within 5 hrs of check-in	Scheduled 4 hrs Can be extended by 2 hrs. If assigned trip after being extended reserve will be paid the greater of 6 hours pay, or the actual flight time for the trip plus 4 hours. Can be used for boarding and pre-departure duties
Move-up Lines	Constructed throughout month by scheduling in seniority order Able to specify 2 protected days off	Constructed first five days of month by f/a in seniority order
Day Off Trades	May trade with other f/a May trade within own line, subject to scheduling approval	May trade with other f/a May trade with reserve pool, subject to scheduling approval
Other		Line holder may displace a reserve up to 12 hours before a trip.

Purser/ISM

	UA	CO
Requirements	Entry by selection process and in seniority order. One year service required.	Entry by selection process. Three years service and a "clean record".
Domestic Narrow Body Pay	\$1.99/hr	\$1/hr (160 or fewer seats)
Domestic Wide Body Pay	Purser: \$3.96/hr 747 aft purser: \$2.19/hr	\$2/hr (more than 160 seats)
International Narrow Body Pay	\$3.96	1 st yr ISM: 20% of hrly rate, up to \$4.60/hr 2 nd yr ISM: 25% of hrly rate, up to \$5.50/hr 3 rd yr rate of 30%, up to \$6.60/hr, grandfathered in for ISMs who reached 3 rd year by June, '92.
International Wide Body Pay	Purser: \$6.16/hr 747 aft purser: \$2.63/hr	
Other		ISMs paid additional \$2/hr on island and international trips (except Canada and Mexico), subject to company discretion. ISM will lose ISM status if they transfer into a base with no ISM vacancies.

Vacations, Furloughs, Schedule Flexibility, etc.

	UA	CO
Vacation Pay	Line holders: 2:36 per day Reserves: 3:57 or 3:45 per day of availability for 30/31 day month	3:15 per day
Vacation Accrual	1-4 yrs: 12 days 5-9 yrs: 19 days 10-16 yrs: 26 days 17-24 yrs: 33 days Over 24 yrs: 40 days	1-4 yrs: 7 days 5-9 yrs: 14 days 10-17 yrs: 21 days 18-24 yrs: 28 days 25-29 yrs: 35 days Over 29 yrs: 37 days
Vacation Options	7 day split minimum 2 splits allowed for 12 -26 days 3 splits allowed for over 26 days Buy back option Day at a time option	7 day split minimum Up to 5 splits allowed Can accrue 1 week per year of unpaid vacation via Flex plan Can work through vacation Can contribute 1 week of paid vacation to 401k
Personal Days Off/ Personal Drops	Minimum 1% of active domicile guaranteed daily. No upper limit. 8 days/year per f/a Awarded 15 and 5 days in advance, by seniority	No minimum guarantee Availability based on coverage. Awarded on 1 st come 1 st served basis, one day in advance May drop a portion of a trip.
Open Trip Trading	Minimum number of trades: 4% of active domicile guaranteed daily. Max number of trade limited by allocation scheme. Trades awarded twice daily, in seniority order. Cannot trade out of non-consecutive multiple trips in a single trade.	No guaranteed minimum number of trades Max number of “different day” trades limited by reserve coverage. No max limits on “same day” trades Trades awarded “instantly” Can trade out of non-consecutive multiple trips in a single trade
Trip Trades with flight attendants	Unlimited and instant via online TradeBoard Can only trade whole IDs/pairings	Unlimited and instant Partial ID/pairing trades ¹ “jetway trades” Mutual trip trade board promised
Increase Flight Time	Open flying requests awarded once per day based on priority and seniority. Can only fly in-base trips	Open flying requests awarded anytime on 1 st come 1 st serve basis. Can pick up out of base trips
Minimum Hours	No minimums.	No minimums Must provide company 1 month notice of intent to fly less than 40 hrs. Vacation and sick leave accrual reduced, for flying less than 40 hrs.
Maternity Leave	90 days Must pass physical to return Can be extended 90 days	Up to 12 months, one-time decision by f/a at time of birth Loss of seniority accrual for pay after 90 days
Non-rev Pleasure Travel	Active employees and retirees, in seniority order. Retirees with 25 years service have higher priority for domestic pleasure travel.	Management ahead of non-management employees, in seniority order, followed by retirees.
Deadhead Business Travel	Company seniority	Chain of command order: Captain followed by f/os, ISMs then f/as in seniority order

Sick Leave	Accrual: 4 hrs per month 950 hrs max Lineholders paid 100 hrs/mo max Reserves paid 3:57 or 3:45 per day for 30/31 day month	Accrual: 4 hrs per month 1000 hrs max Lineholders paid 93 hrs/mo max Reserves paid 4 hrs per day Separate occupational bank. Additional 250 hrs allowed for catastrophic bank. Rapid re-accrual (7hrs per mo) after maternity or long injury.
Furloughs	6 yrs recall rights 2-18 wks pay, based on seniority Voluntary furlough program offered before an involuntary furlough	5 yrs recall rights 2-20 wks pay, based on seniority No voluntary furlough program ² No-furlough clause ³
No-strike Clause	None	Yes

¹ Can split trips, or trade portions of pairings/IDs, where they pass through originating base at common times.

² Leaves of absence must be offered before furlough.

³ May already be compromised by the delay of the 787. Clause in section 1 in effect until seniority lists merged.

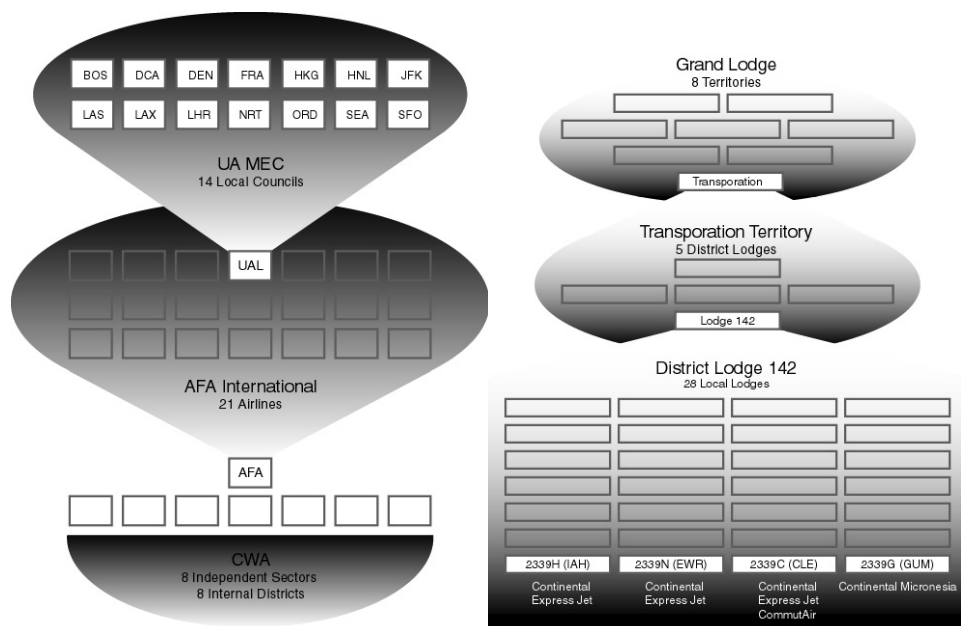
Union Comparison

There are about one hundred thousand (100,000) flight attendants working for U.S. carriers. Most belong to unions. AFA is the largest union that exclusively represents flight attendants. Members at CO and UA are the largest groups of flight attendants within their respective unions.

Structure, Leadership, and Size

Both the IAM and the AFA-CWA can be described as three tiered structures. The similarities end there.

- With the IAM there are local lodges in each of CO's four base cities that represent flight attendants from Express as well as the mainline carrier. The local lodges are subordinate subdivisions of a District lodge (Lodge 142), which is itself a subordinate subdivision of the Grand Lodge.
- At AFA local councils represent flight attendants at each of UA's fourteen domiciles. Local council leaders themselves form the Master Executive Council at the airline, and the board of directors at AFA International, which governs all AFA represented airlines. AFA International operates independently as one of eight autonomous sectors in the CWA group.



At IAM, each level has leaders who are nominated and elected by the membership at the respective levels. Each of the four OCO local lodges elects a president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, and sometimes a conductor/sentinel and a board of trustees. These officers are responsible for conducting local union business according to the IAM Constitution. At the District Lodge Level a president, vice president, secretary-treasurer, and trustee are elected to govern the local lodges, according to the IAM Constitution. Nine officers are elected to the Grand Lodge level; an International President, secretary-treasurer, and seven vice presidents (one from Canada). Though possible, there are no flight attendants elected as officers above local lodge levels of the organization.

At AFA the members at each base elect a president, vice president, and secretary to form a Local Executive Council (LEC). In addition to local administration matters, the local council presidents are responsible for the following:

- They form the Master Executive Council (MEC) for their airline.
- They elect an MEC president, vice president, and secretary - to handle union business, such as negotiations, at their respective airlines.
- They form the AFA International Board of Directors (BOD), the union's highest governing body.
- The BOD oversees all union activities at all represented airlines, determines the annual, budget, amends the Constitution and bylaws, and elects national officers and the AFA international president, vice president, and treasurer.

The AFA International President administers all union operations and represents the AFA at CWA, as one of sixteen board members on the CWA board of directors.

All officers at all levels of the AFA organization are flight attendants.

IAM International and CWA each represent about seven hundred thousand members. District Lodge 142 of the IAM represents about twenty four thousand members in various professions, nine thousand of them flight attendants at five airlines (all CO or CO express). AFA International represents about forty thousand flight attendants at 21 airlines. About fourteen thousand members are at United Airlines.

AFA and IAM both receive benefits and services afforded them as members of their respective larger organization in return for a percentage of dues collected from the membership. Both unions are affiliated with the AFL-CIO.

Membership Numbers, Dues, and Top Officer Salaries

	AFA	IAM
Overall Membership Totals	700,000 (CWA)	700,000
AFA International/ Lodge 142	40,000	24,000
UA/ CO members	14,000	11,500
Total Flight Attendant Members	40,000	11,500
Current Monthly Dues	\$43	\$55.13
Scheduled Increases	Considered annually, based on CWA average. Last increased in 2008, from \$39 to current level (\$4).	Automatically, by \$2.42, annually
Amount Returned to Locals	20%	13%
Top Officer Salaries	CWA President: \$205k AFA International Pres.: \$150k	IAM International Pres.: \$284k Lodge 142 President: \$185k

Voting

IAM members vote to elect officers at all levels, on local issues, and on contracts. Voting is done in person at the local lodge in a 6-7 day period, or by absentee ballot. Votes are conducted and tallied by the IAM. Every four years delegates are elected to vote on issues at the international level.

AFA members elect local officers only, and vote on contracts and issues as required in their Constitution and Bylaws. Voting is done electronically, by phone or online, over a one month period. Votes are conducted and tallied by an independent contractor. Elected representatives decide issues that don't require a membership vote, and elect officers to the MEC and AFA International. The AFA International President represents the union at CWA.

Political Advocacy

There are reasons why corporations and industries spend millions of dollars on lobbyists. One cannot overestimate the importance of a directed presence on Capitol Hill to represent our interests on legislation that affects our incomes, safety, and quality of life. This becomes even more important as globalization continues to transform the world and offer management new sources of labor to replace us.

Both unions have significant lobbying operations, and have historically looked out for the interests of labor. However, AFA focuses exclusively on flight attendant issues and is considered the voice of flight attendants on Capitol Hill. AFA is frequently called on to testify before congress on matters concerning our profession and has a long history of successful influence on issues important to flight attendants, from banning smoking - to FMLA - to certification.

Merger Policy

Between the two unions, AFA has the more comprehensive merger policy. It is written into their Constitution and Bylaws, and specifies date of hire (DOH) as the preferred method of seniority integration. AFA has more experience with mergers of flight attendant groups. AFA was instrumental in legislation of the McCaskill-Bond Amendment, which reinstates some of the Allegheny Mohawk labor protection provisions (LPP) -- no longer enforced since the Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB) ceased to exist after deregulation.

While the IAM has no formal merger policy, their position on seniority integration is defined in the CO contract, and refers to the "fair and equitable" integration language of the Allegheny Mohawk LPP. A recently updated statement in an article on a website further defines their position to specify "date of entry" (DOE) as the preferred method of seniority integration. It appears that DOE and DOH both mean the date you became employed as a flight attendant with your current company.

Company Bias

While it is illegal, under NMB rules, for the company to show favoritism toward either union there is evidence that the company would prefer to manage flight attendants at the merged airline under terms similar to the CO contract, and sees working with IAM as the easier way to achieve that goal. The most likely reason is that a CO-like contract would cost the company less to run the operation than would a UA-like contract. Cost savings would come primarily from the following:

- Given the higher line averages and unlimited max hours in the CO contract, fewer f/as would be needed to run the combined airline. The CO contract requires approximately 16% fewer flight attendants per available seat mile (asm) flown than the UA contract*. A MIT study concluded that UA could operate its current system under the terms of the CO contract with two thousand fewer flight attendants. Similar statements have been made publicly by management.
- The CO contract work rules lead to lower operating costs. For example: shorter rest times would allow the company to slash hotel costs by eliminating most (if not all) the multi-night layovers currently seen on the UA side of the operation.
- Fewer pay guarantees mean the inevitable irregular ops would be least costly to the company.
- Many aspects of the CO contract give management more flexibility to make changes to a flight attendant schedules that benefit the company. For example: the ability to unilaterally change a reserve's days off, depending on operational needs, results in higher reserve utilization.

* CO: 8,438 active f/as, 346 a/c, 82 million available seat miles (asm). UA: 12,787 active f/as, 360 a/c, 104 million asm. (2009)

Evidence of the company's bias toward the OCO contract and the IAM can be seen in the following examples:

- Earlier in 2010 UA VP, Doug McKeen, said publicly that United wants to use Continental's contract "as a basis" for a new flight attendant agreement at United.
- The IAM echoed and expanded McKeen's statement in their own publications: "United is focusing on the IAM-Continental flight attendant agreement as a model for what a contract would look like following a merger *and representation election*" - suggesting that the IAM and management share mutually beneficial goals.

- The few proposals UA management has committed to the table, in negotiations with AFA, mirror language from the CO contract.
- The negotiations update put out in November, 2010 by UA management is a direct appeal to the AFA membership, "selling" certain aspects of the CO contract (some not yet discussed at the bargaining table).
- AFA lawyers warned the company after the IAM began mailing brochures to f/as at addresses on file only with the company.
- The IAM was able to quickly install information boards in all OUA domiciles while the AFA met resistance from OCO base managers.

Depending on your point of view, management's bias toward the IAM may be understandable or troubling. In any case it must be acknowledged if one is to make an informed decision regarding representation.

Summary and disclaimer

This paper is an attempt to chronicle and relate the information I looked at in the process of deciding which union will best represent my interests in the merged United Airlines. I went into the process with an open mind, excited about the possibility of a change. While I have tried to present the information in as unbiased a way as possible, I understand that it may not be received that way. For the sake of brevity the information is condensed and incomplete -- and there are probably errors. When in doubt please consult the references listed in the bibliography, below.

Whatever your decision, it is important that you make it based on objective facts, not emotion -- but by all means, act. This is too important a decision for any of us to sit on the sidelines and let others decide for us. This document is intended to be an open resource that we can all use to help us choose wisely. Please write me with corrections and/or additions.

Thanks to the flight attendants at UA and CO who helped fact check.

Jerome Llerandi
United SFOSW
llerjer@gmail.com or on Facebook

This paper is available online at <http://freepdfhosting.com/439a29ba74.pdf>

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