



## Flight 253:

### *A Frightening Reminder*

In this dangerous world, our continued voice as safety and security professionals is imperative.

By Danny G. Campbell

**D**elta flight attendants around the world were heartened by the courageous work of our fellow flight attendants on Flight 253, which was threatened by a terrorist bomber on Christmas Day. Their bravery and professionalism saved the lives of 290 Delta passengers and crew.

Northwest Airlines Flight 253 had departed Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport (AMS) to Detroit's Metro Airport (DTW) with

279 passengers, 8 flight attendants and 3 pilots aboard. Shortly before landing, a passenger seated in 19A tried to ignite a small explosive device consisting of a mix of plastic explosive powder and liquid acid.

Passenger Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, later charged with being an Al Qaeda operative, had attempted to blow up the aircraft as part of a horrific terrorist plot. Thanks to the heroic actions of the crew and passengers aboard the flight, he did not get a second

chance to complete his mission, after his first attempt to set off the explosive device failed.

When Delta flight attendants across the country began to hear the details of flight 253, it brought many of us back to the tragic events of September 11, 2001, and served as a sobering reminder that we live in a dangerous world where our workplace continues to be the target of terrorist plots.

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Marianne Bicksler  
Former Supervisor Testifies at NMB

See testimony excerpts, Pages 4-6

## New Voting Rules Under Review

### *Flight Attendants Weigh In at NMB Hearing*

**A**s the New Year began, the National Mediation Board closed its comment period on proposed voting rules to make representation elections more democratic. The NMB has at least 30 days to review comments and decide whether or not to adopt the new rules, and is expected to take another 30-45 days to hear rebuttals and appeals.

But Delta flight attendants, cheered by the overwhelming support for the new rules and their own strong testimony at the NMB's public hearing in December, are preparing for a quick decision and the opportunity to vote for representation by the

Association of Flight Attendants (Delta AFA).

Emailed comments to the NMB were running 6-1 in favor of the new rules, and written letters were nearly 4-1 in favor, not including the 20,000 petition signatures gathered by the International Association of Machinists in cards submitted to the NMB. Letters of support for the new rule came in letters signed by 39 U.S. senators and 191 members of the House, including 13 Republican members.

Among those testifying for the new rules before an NMB public hearing on Dec. 7 were

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Some 30 Delta flight attendants gathering to march in the Martin Luther King Jr. Day parade in Atlanta Jan. 18 were joined by AFA President Pat Friend, second from left. After the march, Delta flight attendant Patricia Lockhart (inset, right) was among those paying tribute to Dr. King at Ebenezer Church, speaking on behalf of the Delta flight attendants.\*



## Reserve or A-Days? We Can Decide!

In The Year of A Voice,  
Let's Resolve to Raise Ours

It's 2010 – Year of A Voice. Who better to bring news of a voice than the loudest mouth in the South ... North, East and West?

Year of A Voice! What does this mean? It's each and every singular voice expressing his or her opinions into one massive, resonating voice of unity. It's brilliance, it's strength, it's wisdom, it's power. Together we create a force for the good of Delta, the good of our career – a cohesive joint effort that starts with one voice to create A Voice.

The best thing about this New Year is the reality that we are truly going to have A Voice. Together we take this group, this airline, to the top – using conversations and engagement to garner our seat at the table. I vow to use this time to talk to flight attendants about what's important to each and every one. I ask you to do the same.

That's how it's done. Communicate with each other. We negotiate contracts through surveys and conversations. The added bonus is that having the conversations now will help us smoothly integrate onto the aircraft later this year.

I am truly excited and positive (am I turning into Dear Pollyanna?) that 2010 is going to be a year to remember. Is it twenty ten or two thousand ten? There, that's your first conversation ... GO!

**Dear Kim,  
Will AFA make us have Reserve or A-Days?**

– I Want a Life

Dear Lifer,

AFA doesn't make you do anything. AFA isn't an oligarchy that dictates to you. You are AFA and AFA is you.

Here's the Cliff Notes version of how AFA works: Flight attendants have input into the type of reserve system they prefer. It isn't imposed upon them by the company. Consensus is king. That's how it works with a contract.

Obviously the company has its preference and operational needs must be addressed, but this is done together. How do AFA representatives know what to ask for in negotiations? Simple: They ask the folks that elected them. It's done with surveys. You can actually participate in a survey right now about this very subject. I pulled a few strings (AKA blackmail) to get a survey built so we can get an idea about how everyone thinks about this hot topic. Go to [www.deltaafa.org](http://www.deltaafa.org) to take the survey. Now, go take the survey and leave me alone.. I think I need more coffee.\*

# Ex-Supervisors' Message: 'Get it in Writing'

By Danny G. Campbell

**O**ur campaign to win a legal voice [and contract] on the job is enriched by participation of many former Delta supervisors who in the past have helped manage and support their flying partners as Field Service Managers (FSMs). Now, convinced that Delta flight attendants need a legally binding contract, they are speaking out to support representation by Delta AFA.

"Countless times in my capacity as a manager I thought, 'you know, the existence of a legal contract sure would make my job easier and enhance the relationship between management and flight at-

Shunda Gray, who served as FSM and interim General Manager of the LAX base. Shunda was offered a secret five-year leave/furlough by executive management when she faced the tough decision to support her husband's career path (requiring a relocation to Texas). This 'special' leave was effective July 2007 and was not part of any published leave or furlough program offered to the entire Delta flight attendant group.

While her leave was set to expire in 2012, Shunda received notice this past year that management was now rescinding the leave and her employment with Delta was abruptly terminated.

While many former supervisors did not have the same experience when it came to "just-cause" issues, they share one common sentiment: They agree it is difficult to provide adequate support for flight attendants when rules, policies and the airline's corporate executives are constantly changing. Without the consistency that a collective bargaining agreement provides, flight attendants are too often vulnerable to the loose interpretation of rules and policies as well as the sudden modification of them.

"In the past 25 years, Delta has had five different CEOs and countless changes in middle management," said NYC flight attendant Charlie Rodgers. "Along with each of these leaders come new corporate philosophies, new priorities, changes in pay, work rules and benefits. Expecting our flight attendants to adapt to these changes can be unrealistic. Having a legal contract in place, with time-testing grievance enforcement, makes perfect sense."

Charlie should know. He's been a Delta flight attendant since 1979 and served as a supervisor from 1993 to 1995. Charlie joined the AFA campaign as a Regional Coordinator for New York [and the surrounding area] when he realized "the time had come for me to admit that the Delta Air Lines of today was no longer the company I have dedicated several decades of my life to."

Charlie says he still loves his airline, but needed to accept that Delta's rapid growth, combined with the enormous recent strains on the industry were valid reasons to rethink what having representation really means.

"Learning to view union



*"In an industry with razor sharp profit margins, plans change, executives change – a contract is in writing and makes everyone accountable for their promises."*

– MaryEllen Moore

tendants," said Marianne Bicksler, a 23-year flight attendant currently based in SLC. Marianne served as a supervisor for 5 years and also took her advocacy for flight attendants to the boardroom, where she served as a member of the now-defunct Flight Attendant Forum.

Marianne is not alone when it comes to understanding how important a "legal relationship" can be between management and front-line employees. Several of the former supervisors interviewed for this article recall accounts of preferential treatment, blacklisting and even arbitrary terminations in which flight attendants were provided little-to-no "just-cause" protection or support.

The danger of not having a legal contract became a personal problem for flight attendant

"Like many Delta flight attendants, I placed a high premium on the 'direct relationship' our executives promote in their campaign against representation," said Shunda. "I now see that the term 'direct relationship' is merely a catch phrase – one meant to excuse leaders from being accountable for their word."

Shunda believes having a legal contract for Delta flight attendants would promote more account-

ability and transparency in the relationship between management and flight attendants.



Shunda Gray  
Trusted executives

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# Marianne Bicksler Testimony

... My name is Marianne Bicksler and I am here today to testify on how the current National Mediation Board voting rules unnecessarily create a hostile working environment during airline elections and why they are contrary to the values of our American democracy.

I would also like to share my experience as an in-flight supervisor during the first AFA Delta organizing campaign, where a vote was requested in August 2001 and the final votes were tallied in early 2002. Even though a majority of flight attendants over time had signed authorization cards, our ultimate percentage “voting” for representation came in at less than 30%. How did this happen?

Having become a supervisor for Delta Air Lines in 1996, hoping to make a positive difference for our flight attendant group, I was amazed at the alarming turn of events as the organizing drive gathered steam and Delta hired the American Consulting Company, which is a firm specializing in “union avoidance”. Each flight attendant base had a representative on staff from this company. Those staff members employed tactics which were designed to teach us, as supervisors, to intimidate flight attendants.

As a supervisor at that time, my job became to employ first-hand the tactics these consultants taught us. The strategies and tactics they utilized were designed around, and because of, the current NMB voting procedures. The tactics they deployed were all based on voter suppression.

Every morning the consultants conducted a briefing to update us on the latest “hot” topic issues that flight attendants were discussing, especially issues that may make flight attendants vote for representation. We were taught techniques to confront flight attendants and

confuse, twist and turn the issue around without any real relevance to the truth.

Specifically, other tactics we used were:

- When AFA activists asked to set up a table in the lounge to have conversations with fellow flight attendants, we had to block the AFA table by inviting other “vendors” to set up tables ahead of time and instituted a rule that only one “vendor” could be in the lounge at any given time. Delta flight attendant AFA activists were considered vendors. This frequently made it impossible to have any union table in the lounge area.
- We were given anti-union fliers to ensure they were stocked and present in the lounges.
- We collected any union information in the lounge area and threw it away.
- We conducted intimidating one-on-one meetings behind closed doors with flight attendants to tell them not to join the union.
- We attended union meetings and reported back about topics issues discussed.
- The consultants targeted supervisors who were not aggressive enough in their anti-union tactics and counseled them that if flight attendants elected a union, their job security was at risk.
- We were promised a substantial “bonus” if we met certain objectives, including the “union avoidance” objective.
- We were told to be constantly visible in the crew lounges, again an intimidation tactic.

Once the election was called, things really started heating up. Among the worst tactics deployed, and what is most relevant to today’s hearing, was when flight attendants were told by the company to rip up their ballots and

throw them away. Can you think of anything more contrary to our democracy? ...

As if the in person intimidation wasn’t enough, Delta had a separate, insidious track in the list of eligible voters. Specifically:

- Delta management made sure that the flight attendants never got a copy of the system-wide seniority list. They could view it, but could never actually obtain a copy. Due to the fact that 21,000 flight attendants were spread out nationwide and in some cases other countries, it was virtually impossible to contact flight attendants to communicate the benefits of a union. The only message that many of the flight attendants heard was the anti-union communication.
- Delta kept as many flight attendants as they could on the seniority list to manipulate the current voting system. In simple terms: the more “flight attendants” on the list, the greater amount of “No” votes. After all, under the current rules everyone begins as a No vote.
- Many flight attendants on leaves of absence had no idea they were eligible to vote, so they didn’t. They threw their ballots away. They all counted as “no” votes, even if they were supportive of representation.
- Supervisors were put on “active” status and counted as “No” votes.

So, it was a multi-track strategy: Suppress the vote of active flight attendants, pad the list to create more “No” votes, and hide the list so flight attendants couldn’t actually have access with one another to share why it was important to form a union.

Having seen this side of supervision, I returned to the line and became an AFA activist, understanding that was the only honest way to make a difference for our flight attendants. ... ❄

# Janette Rook Testimony



My name is Janette Rook and I'm here today on behalf of myself as a worker and of the Northwest

Association of Flight Attendants-CWA. ...

I have been a flight attendant for eleven years at Northwest Airlines, now for Delta Air Lines, and I also have the honor of serving Northwest Airlines flight attendants as Master Executive Council President, Association of Flight Attendants-CWA. After reviewing much of the rationale that supports this rule change, I strongly agree with the solid, logical reasons for the change given by Board members Hoglander and Puchala.

On behalf of tens of thousands of active and retired Northwest Airlines flight attendants, I respectfully request that the Board consider the high stakes and risk that we would be subject to if current voting procedures are applied to our upcoming election at Delta Air Lines. Thousands of workers and retirees risk losing the basic rights and protections that we have sacrificed and fought for over decades. This merger represents an extraordinary challenge for us - after over 60 years as a legally recognized partner in our airline's merger history, we are now confronted with the very real possibility of losing our contract, our union and our collective bargaining rights in a merger designed solely by Delta Air Lines executives.

2009 marks the 62nd anniversary of collective bargaining rights for Northwest Airlines Flight Attendants. On September 19th, 1947, Northwest Airlines and the Air Line Stewards and Stewardesses Association (the predecessor to AFA) signed our first legally binding contract - a tradition that

has endured for over half a century. Many provisions contained in that first contract have survived through decades in an often volatile airline industry.

While it's true a majority of flight attendants have managed to join unions over the past 75 years under the onerous and atypical voting rules of the NMB, there are some very good reasons why we had to surmount all obstacles to attain our right to a legal contract. We are exempt from many of the rights and protections provided by American labor laws, with most of the oversight for cabin crew provided by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and a limited number of Federal Air Regulations (FARs). For example; flight attendants do not enjoy the full rights provided by the 1938 Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), we have very limited to no coverage under the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), and since its inception we have been denied the access that all other full time American workers have enjoyed under the Family Medical Leave Act.

Flight attendants still lack many of the basic worker protections provided to most Americans under federal laws, and that makes a union contract a necessity. Due to a lot of hard work, guts, and sacrifice, Northwest flight attendants have filled those gaps in labor laws for flight attendants through collective bargaining and unionism. Our collective bargaining agreements have done what labor laws have not for our profession - they have created decent standards for flight attendant pay, rest, work rules, and provided job security. The progress we achieved together has helped us make a short-term job into a career.

Speaking to you today, 62 years after Northwest Airlines flight attendants first gained a seat

at the negotiations table; I feel the weight of responsibility for the future of our career. As flight attendants at the world's largest airline, we will set the standard for our industry. As part of an unbroken line of unionists at Northwest Airlines, we recognize a solemn commitment to uphold the achievements made by thousands of flight attendants who have come before us, and to honor our promises to them in retirement.

Our merger with Delta Air Lines brings exciting opportunities, but we risk losing what we often considered inalienable rights - our legal contract and legal voice at work. With so much hanging in the balance in a single vote, we deserve the fairest voting method possible for that momentous occasion.

On the matter of board neutrality, I would like to state for the record that in 2008 the Board has hardly exercised its authority in a fair and impartial, or neutral, fashion. Delta Air Lines management illegally interfered in its employees' right to form a union with AFA. More than 100 charges of interference were submitted by flight attendants, but the majority of the Board not only dismissed those charges, but even voted 2 to 1 to refuse to even investigate the charges. This episode alone refutes any claim of historic Board neutrality.

I would ask that those who assert this historical neutrality tell the thousands of Delta flight attendants how fair this Board has been, flight attendants who wanted AFA to represent them. Workers who not once, but twice have seen the Board's lack of neutrality - a Board that too many times has failed to carry out its duties in a fair and impartial manner. ...

I applaud the Board's proposal to amend its rules to make voting for representation in the transportation industry more democratic, with the majority of those voting deciding the outcome. ... ❁

# Samuel Berry Testimony



When I ran for student council in College, it was a completely different ball game; different from running in high school. The election was no longer a “popularity contest.” It wasn’t about how many people you knew or how many people thought you were cool. It was reality, me against my opponent, running for Secretary of Treasurer. I remember how hard I worked to win; I did everything I could! I was at different buildings on campus each day getting know everyone, spreading my word, handing out literature and of course, educating the masses.

Election Day was not stressful

for me at all! Inside I knew that I won ... I was certain all my hard work paid off and I was excited to start serving! The decision was only a couple hours away and my patience was running out!

This was it, the envelope was handed over and my name was seconds away from being called.

“The Elected Secretary of Treasurer is ... Travis Day!”

Now, my name is Samuel Berry, which sounds nothing like Travis Day. My heart sank immediately (honestly, I was crushed) but at that point, I took a deep breath, kept my head up and shook Travis’ hand with pride. Later I found out that I had lost by only 3 votes. I kept a smile on my face knowing that I lost fair and square. I did everything I felt I could to win but apparently, I didn’t try hard enough.

Democracy took place right in front of my face and I could not have been prouder of our system.

What about the people who chose not to vote that day? The people who were opposed to both of us, who forgot to vote, who had not been reached or who simply didn’t feel like taking the time to get out to vote? I sure would not have wanted those people to decide the outcome of our election. Those people chose not to vote “no” but to abstain. To me, it would definitely not have been justified for any of them to count in the final analysis.

The Union election process under the current NMB rules that has been put in place over 75 years is not consistent with democratic voting standards. Forgetting to vote, procrastinating, not being reached because I’m on furlough or am on a leave, currently results in a “no” vote. This is unjustifiable. ... ❄

## NMB Hearing, *from page 1*

three pro-Delta AFA flight attendants, including NWA MEC President Janette Rook, who described the challenge, “after over 60 years as a legally recognized partner in our airline’s merger history, we are now confronted with the very real possibility of losing our contract, our union and our collective bargaining rights in a merger designed solely by Delta Air Lines executives.”

Applauding the NMB’s proposed new election rules, Rook said, “At Delta Air Lines, we have high hopes that our election will be at the forefront of a progressive step forward for the working men and women of our country.”

Marianne Bicksler, a former Delta flight attendant supervisor and now a union activist, chronicled Delta’s long history of interference with flight attendants’ efforts to gain representation.

“It was a multi-track strategy,” Bicksler said, “(to) suppress the vote of active flight attendants, pad the (seniority) list to create more ‘No’ votes and hide the list so flight attendants couldn’t actually have access with one another to share why it was important to form a union.

“The current voting method encourages employers to tell employees not to vote, don’t participate, tear up your ballot, throw your ballot away, don’t get informed and just don’t vote,” she said. “A ballot is our voice. The current NMB voting rules for union elections erodes that voice. I ask you to restore the voices of workers and implement the changes you have proposed.”

Also addressing the Board was Samuel Berry, a pre-merger Northwest flight attendant based in Detroit who recalled running for student council in college and losing by only three votes. While

crushed, he acknowledged that “democracy took place right in front of my face and I could not have been prouder of our system.”

“The union election process under the current NMB rules that have been in place over 75 years is not consistent with democratic voting standards,” he said. “Forgetting to vote, procrastinating, not being reached because I’m on furlough or am on leave, currently results in a ‘no’ vote. This is unjustifiable.”

Flight attendants were only one of the interested parties at the hearing, which featured testimony from academics, attorneys and representatives not only of pilots and mechanics, but also of railroad employees. Representatives from Delta Air Lines and other transportation companies uniformly opposed the new rules, although Southwest Airlines submitted a letter stating that it was “neutral” on the proposal.\*

## **Flight 253**, *from page 1*

The incident also serves as a reminder that with the expanded worldwide route system our merger has created, we are at an increased risk of exposure to security threats. Now, as the “new” Delta, we are the world’s largest airline. Flight 253 was targeted within a week of the FAA granting Delta a Single Operating Certificate (SOC), allowing Delta to fully integrate both carriers into one transportation system.

Within days of the attempted attack, AFA members applauded tougher screening rules called for by President Obama and stepped-up coordination with the intelligence community. And we renewed our request for mandatory (not voluntary) counter-terrorism training.

Our union gives us the strong voice needed to secure the necessary tools and resources to protect our workplace, and the lives of our fellow crewmembers and passengers. Never before has this “voice” been more important.

Whether it is the immediate response from our Air Safety, Health and Security committee, our union’s fight for tougher legislation and long-awaited changes in security regulations, or the 24/7 employee assistance and peer support our flight attendants receive through AFA’s Employee Assistance Program, our union has never been more relevant.

While Delta and Northwest were not the primary targets on 9/11, Northwest flight attendants were the first in the industry to secure self-defense and anti-terrorism training after the attacks – thanks to an agreement struck with Richard Anderson, now Delta’s CEO.

Through the hard work of their union, NWA attendants were offered top-notch [paid] training from a prestigious Israeli security firm (GS-3), jointly chosen by Anderson and labor leaders – including the leadership of the union’s Air Safety, Health and Security committee.

As we begin the New Year, we

must be aware that not only will our airline continue to be a target for dangerous terrorist activity, but also for economic and operational changes in our industry. We must ask ourselves if we are willing to face these challenges with no legal voice or clout in the halls of Congress, at the bargaining table, or within the government agencies that have regulatory oversight of our workplace.

For many of us, the risks associated with confronting our challenges without a recognized legal

standing (i.e. no union voice) is simply not an option. Our “collective” strength helps us to raise the bar for our profession, advancing our workplace and working lives.

Today, we must have the resolve to win our upcoming AFA vote and be willing to accept a leadership role within our profession as “World Class Delta Flight Attendants.” Ignoring that responsibility will, no doubt, result in diminishing our profession – not just at the new Delta Air Lines, but around the world as well.\*

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## **‘Get It in Writing’**, *from page 3*

representation as a viable means of *increasing* my loyalty to the company was a new and revolutionary concept for me to consider,” Rodgers added. “Today, I see joining AFA-CWA as a means of taking ownership of my career and my company.”

Similar views were expressed by Delta supervisors in ATL, FLM and LAX. MaryEllen Moore, who served as a FSM in LAX said, “Many of us took positions in management when the Delta family really did exist. But, things have changed – the industry is more volatile, there has been a revolving door at our corporate offices and we now face unprecedented threats to our profession.” One of the biggest threats, she said, is the “outsourcing of our jobs to low-paid foreign workers” (or, what she refers to as “the global race to the bottom.”)

MaryEllen, who is currently based in ATL, grew up in a conservative family and says she is proud of the 10 years she spent as a supervisor, as well as a special assignment flight attendant. She believes the new airline’s massive international route structure, combined with past efforts to outsource flight attendant jobs [by certain executives while they were at NWA] require tough legal scope

protections for the 20,000 world class Delta flight attendants.

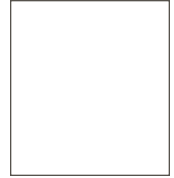
“I am less concerned with what our executives tell us are their plans today in terms of guaranteeing our jobs on international routes,” she said. “I am more concerned with what happens in the future. In an industry with razor sharp profit margins, plans change, executives change – a contract is in writing and makes everyone accountable for their promises.”

In addition to the professional advantages that come with having a legal contract, “having the right to participate” in decisions made by the airline is an important opportunity available to Delta flight attendants by joining AFA, the former supervisors agreed. Several expressed their excitement about flight attendants being polled on issues like A-Days (vs. Reserve), or openly expressing their opinions on pension and benefits issues.

“It warms my heart to see our flying partners begin to take real ownership of our career,” said Bicksler. “Since this merger was announced, I have seen a noticeable change in the level of self-empowerment Delta flight attendants feel toward our profession. It gives me great hope that when we win the Delta AFA election that we will be in a strong position to obtain a contract worthy of being a World Class Delta Flight Attendant.”\*



The Association of Flight Attendants-CWA, AFL-CIO  
501 Third Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001  
[www.deltaafa.org](http://www.deltaafa.org)



## When Do We Vote?

The truth is we don't know. The process is in the hands of the government.

Here's what we do know:

- On Jan. 4, 2010 — the 60-day public comment period for the NMB's proposed rule change closed.
- The NMB must now take at least 30 days to look over all the comments before it makes its decision.



• Once that review period ends, there will be a posting of the NMB's final decision in the Federal Register, where it must remain for 30 days, before it takes effect. Barring any legal challenges to the NMB's decision ...

- AFA can then file with the NMB asking it to determine that a Single Transportation System

(STS) exists for flight attendants at the 'new' Delta. Since Delta just received the Single Operating Certificate (SOC) from the FAA, it won't take long to make that determination. This action is what triggers our representation election.

- The NMB starts the election process — eligibility lists are received from the company and our voting period is established.
- Then the election begins.

We could have had the election sooner if Richard Anderson had acted on the letter sent by the Campaign Coordinating Committee (C3) requesting an immediate vote under the election process that is proposed. Mike Campbell turned us down. That was in November 2009.\*

