



NEGOTIATIONS 2016
Our Contract, Our Customers, Our Future
Transport Workers Union of America, AFL-CIO
Air Transport Division - Local 555
Southwest Airlines Ramp, Operations, Provisioning & Freight Agents



MEDIA ADVISORY

For Immediate Release – February 19, 2016

Contact: Jamie Horwitz at 202/549-4921, jhdcpr@starpower.net
or Patti Adams at Pattiadams@twu555.org , 501/519-2743

**In a Close Vote, Ground Workers Approve
New Contract with Southwest Airlines**

**New labor agreement includes 20 percent wage increase,
first raises in five years for many ramp workers
at highly profitable airline**

DALLAS – After a five-year, often difficult contract battle, Transport Workers Union Local 555, the union representing 12,000 ground crew workers employed by Southwest Airlines, announced today that union members narrowly voted to approve a tentative agreement with the airline. TWU members by a close margin, 50.4 percent (4,703) cast “yes” votes, and 49.6 percent voted “no” (4,628), out of 11,073 eligible. Electronic voting began February 4 and concluded earlier today. Ballots were tallied this afternoon in Dallas.

On December 29, 2015, the TWU Local 555 Executive Board voted to send the tentative agreement to union members for a ratification vote without a recommendation. Contract talks had been ongoing since July of 2011 and federal mediation with the assistance of the National Mediation Board began in September of 2012.

“Our Board wanted the members to decide this one,” said TWU Local 555 President Greg Puriski. “While we had reached agreement on significant improvements in compensation there were still unresolved issues important to our members related primarily to working conditions. This was a hard vote for many of our members and this explains the close results.” The new contract includes pay raises of more than 20 percent over the five-year life of the agreement.

Southwest Airlines earned a record 2.4 billion in 2015. The airline has been growing in both size and profits since the ground workers contract became amendable in 2011, yet many ground workers have not had a raise during that period.

“This agreement is not the end of the road,” said Puriski. “This is merely a stop on the journey. We will continue to work for improved job security and working conditions and stress the importance of recapturing the culture that has made this company a model for not only the airline industry, but for all U.S. employers.”

Added Puriski, “Southwest’s long-time winning formula has largely been replaced by a structure not unlike the failed legacy carriers of the past. Other airlines have become more like Southwest. Somewhere our flight paths crossed—we’re now becoming what they used to be. Management should look at the closeness of this vote and respect what the “no” voters have said and work with the union leadership to improve working conditions and employee morale in order to build an even more successful Southwest Airlines.”

TWU Local 555 is a local union of the Transport Workers Union of America (TWU), representing more than 12,000 ramp, operations, provisioning and freight agents at Southwest Airlines.

###