



A Newsletter to Connect CWA Passenger Service Professionals

This is the CWA Agents Connected newsletter. CWA represents over 20,000 passenger service and fleet service employees at American Airlines, including mainline American Airlines and regional carriers Piedmont and Envoy. In this newsletter we cover stories of interest to agents at all three airlines. If you'd like to suggest a story or share a picture of you and your co-workers taking action to build our union, email us at info@cwaagents.org.

Summer 2021

As Travel Soars So Does Passenger Rage

As travel opens up after the lock downs and quarantines of 2020, reports from every region of the country about incidents of unruly and sometimes violent behavior by passengers are on the rise. CWA is working with other unions, lawmakers, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), and airline management to find solutions to this urgent issue.

On July 6, after a passenger physically assaulted three Piedmont Airlines employees at Charlotte Douglas International airport, CWA called on the FAA to act immediately to ensure that the passenger would be held accountable under federal law. Due to failures by local law enforcement, the agents themselves were forced to file assault charges. Our union is working to correct this lack of enforcement, which is an ongoing and serious problem even though airline customer service agents are covered under the passenger assault provisions of the 2018 FAA Reauthorization.

Members report that some customers have become so hostile that agents have been locked down on site for their own safety. Every member's safety is our first priority. If you feel threatened or feel you are in an unsafe situation, go to the jet bridge if it is the closest safe location, and notify airport police and management immediately. Alert a local union steward or officer about the incident after you are safe so that we can track these events and make sure they are reported to local and federal law enforcement.

In the first five months of 2021 the FAA investigated almost 400 cases of hostile behavior by passengers for possible enforcement actions. That compares to a normal average of about 140 cases per full year. From January to early June the FAA reported more than 3,000 incidents of unruly airline passengers. More than two-thirds of those passengers became argumentative or violent about federal mask mandates. Masks still provide a valuable layer of protection from infection for passengers and airline workers. Not all travelers have access to or choose to be vaccinated, so those protections are necessary. When gate agents and flight attendants ask travelers to wear masks as the law requires, responses often include shouting, name-calling, and cursing.

Read more at: <https://www.cwaagents.org/news/travel-soars-so-does-passenger-rage>

Responding to Mandatory Overtime

As we all know, under-staffing is a major issue throughout our industry right now. Mandatory overtime is extremely high at airports and reservation centers. At reservations centers, the call abandon rate is over 50% at times.

In order to better manage the amount of mandatory overtime required of agents as the number of travelers increases, the CWA/IBT Association and CWA Airline Council developed a trial in Reservations based on suggestions from members. Last week, we modified the trial agreement with your feedback. **The modified trial will run for a three-week period starting July 5 and ending July 25.**

The number of hours is reduced to 6 hours per week for part-time and full-time agents, for a total of 18 hours over the three-week period. Rules on managing the agreement remain in place with these additional considerations:

- The Company shall consider all long calls of 30 minutes or longer as part of the mando requirement.
- Part-time agents will be given an opportunity to volunteer to temporarily upgrade to full-time hours, which would allow them to accrue sick and vacation time as full-time agents. These additional hours would count toward the mando requirement.
- Adherence standards will be relaxed for the term of the trial.

Rest assured, we are working hard to find ways to improve your flexibility and work experience while we get through this difficult time.

View the most recent agreement [here](#) and an overview [here](#).

A Survey to Gather More Information

Overtime notices are issued at the local level, and local union leaders are not always included in the notice to members. This makes it impossible to understand the scope of the excessive mando problem nationally. For that reason, we need your help to find out how often and why members are being asked to work overtime.

Please take a few minutes to complete [this survey](#) to help us. If you have received a mando notification since June 23, and going forward, please send a copy to CWA at info@cwaagents.org or to your IBT local.

In the meantime, American has been hiring and training new agents on a consistent basis, and VEOP agents have come back as temporary employees. The first class of new agents is just coming out. Airport agents at several locations are taking calls at the airports. All calls taken by temporary employees and airport agents are offered as overtime to reservations agents to comply with our contract.

Vaccine Rollout

To encourage employees to be vaccinated, American Airlines announced an incentive program that applies to all American Airlines Group employees based in the United States, including those at Envoy and Piedmont. The incentive amounts to one paid vacation day to be taken in 2022 and \$50 worth of points in the recognition program.

CWA strongly recommends that members be vaccinated with an FDA-approved vaccine to protect themselves, their families, their co-workers, and their communities.

1. If you're having any trouble finding a convenient vaccination appointment that works with your schedule, try the clearinghouse [VaccineFinder](#), which will show you many of the options in your area. Have all your information ready.
2. If you're booking an appointment online or on the phone, make sure you know your own medical history and have your ID ready. Remember: The COVID-19 vaccine is supposed to be free, but check with your provider and insurance company to find out if there are any administrative charges for care. Tell your vaccine provider if you've had an allergic reaction to other vaccines in the past. The CDC recommends that if you have a history of allergic reactions that aren't related to vaccines or injectable medicines, you should still get vaccinated.
3. Help others, if you can. Share information with your co-workers, friends, family and neighbors who need a little help finding and getting to appointments.

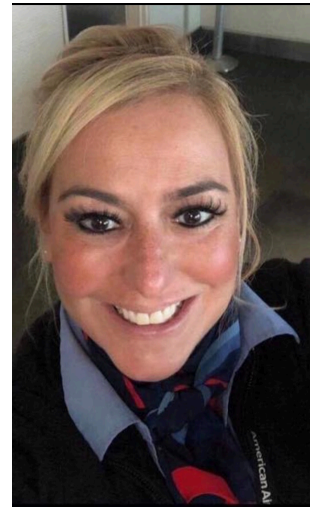
If you'd like more information, here are a few great resources:

[The essential COVID-19 vaccine FAQ](#) (PBS)

[What to Expect at Your Vaccine Appointment](#) (CDC)

[Why Everyone Should Get Paid Time Off For The COVID-19 Vaccine](#) (Huffington Post)

From Rio to TYS



One of Piedmont's newest stewards took a long, international route before landing at TYS in Knoxville. Adriane Whitworth grew up in Brazil and worked there many years for Continental and then United before fulfilling her dream of moving to the United States.

Her job with United took her to Houston before she landed at USAir and American Airlines in Nashville and finally at Piedmont in Knoxville. We talked to Adriane about her experiences as a passenger service agent over the difficult past year and her goals as a new steward.

What's your position at TYS?

We're a small airport, but extremely busy with over 20 flights a day, so we all do everything, from working at the gate and cargo shipments to the ticket counter and kiosks. I feel like I have a lot of knowledge about all the positions now that I didn't have when I was at mainline, but it's also hard for new hires to learn so many different things. It can feel overwhelming.

Do you have a favorite position as an agent?

I like them all, but lately I look forward to cargo because passengers have become so challenging. We've all been dealing with the boom in travel, delays, and lack of staff. That's one reason I decided to become a steward. I want to help resolve some of the issues that agents are struggling with right now.

[Read More](#)

Spring News Recap

Pension Benefits for Early Retirees

In early June the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC) changed some restrictions that could affect CWA agents who have a pension defaulted to the PBGC, such as USAirways.

If the changes affect you and you are still working for the employer that sponsored your plan but have not reached normal retirement age, you could start to receive early retirement benefits while still working, provided you meet all the eligibility requirements for early retirement.

For more information, visit

<https://www.pbgc.gov/wr/benefits/workingretirement>. Or if you believe you may be affected by this change and want to know more, contact PBGC at 1-800-400-7242.

AA Bargaining Postponed to Avoid Unnecessary Concessions

As we all know, American Airlines is still experiencing a considerable disruption to its business as a result of the COVID-19 epidemic. In the first quarter of 2021, the company reported revenues that were 53% below the same quarter of 2020 and 62% below the same quarter in 2019. Substantially reduced revenues have resulted in the company spending more money on operations than it brings in and a cash burn rate of \$27 million per day in the most recent quarter. Analysts project a return to pre-pandemic passenger volumes across the industry by 2023 at the earliest.

The CWA-IBT Association will postpone opening the contract for bargaining until the airline is in a more stable position to avoid any unnecessary concessions. After the PSP sunsets at the end of September we should see a better picture of where the airline stands. Our plan now is to start the process in early 2022.

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THE PRO ACT=

WORKER POWER



Legislative Update: PSP & the PRO Act

The thousands of letters, postcards, emails, and phone calls CWA members sent to Congress over the past year made a difference—and we can be proud of the role we played. In March, Congress passed the **American Rescue Plan**, which extended the **Payroll Support Program (PSP)** through **September 30, 2021**, keeping passenger service agents and other aviation workers connected to our essential jobs and healthcare.

The next legislation we need Congress to pass in order to help all working families is the **Protecting Our Right to Organize Act**, also known as the **PRO Act**, which has passed in the U.S. House, but is stalled in the Senate. Just like the Rescue Plan, it's going to take an all-hands-on-deck effort to make it happen.

[Read More](#)

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If you haven't visited our website for a while, please check out [CWAagents.org](https://www.cwaagents.org). To stay up-to-date on bargaining, mobilization, and other issues, be sure to follow us on Facebook at [American Agents Connected](https://www.facebook.com/AmericanAgentsConnected), [Piedmont AgentsConnected](https://www.facebook.com/PiedmontAgentsConnected), and [Envoy Agents](https://www.facebook.com/EnvoyAgents).

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