



## TIMELINE: CWA and US Airways Passenger Service Agents

### June 1995

Passenger service employees at US Airways began organizing with CWA.

Among workers' key concerns:

- a wage freeze that had been in place since 1992
- cuts to pension benefits
- elimination of paid sick and vacation days and holidays
- an unfair two-tier benefits system
- lack of job security protections in the event of a sale or merger

As US Airways became more profitable, other work groups—including flight attendants, pilots, and machinists—shared in the benefits of the airline's success while passenger service employees were left behind.

### April 1996

CWA filed a petition for a representation election with the [National Mediation Board](#) (NMB), the agency that facilitates labor-management relations for US airlines under the Railway Labor Act (RLA).

### December 1996-January 1997

The NMB conducted a union representation election for US Airways passenger service employees. Although 45 percent of employees voted *for* CWA representation, the agents were 447 votes shy of winning representation because the rules, at the time, required a majority of **eligible voters** to vote *for* the union in order to win. (The [rules were changed](#) in 2010 to require that a majority of **actual voters** vote for the union in order to win.)

### February 1997

CWA filed objections with the NMB, citing US Airways management's interference in and illegal conduct during the organizing campaign.

### June 1997

The NMB upheld CWA's objections and called for a new election.

### July 1997

US Airways filed suit in federal district court objecting to the NMB's ordering of a new election. US Airways sought a temporary restraining order to stop the re-run election. The court denied their request.

### August-October 1997

NMB conducted a new mail ballot election. This time, 55 percent of the 8,772 eligible employees voted for CWA representation. The NMB certified the CWA as the exclusive bargaining agent for US Airways passenger service employees.

**December 1997**

Passenger service employees elected a bargaining council, which represented all job classifications. A survey of members led to bargaining goals, and negotiations began. Management filed a challenge to the election and the NMB's ground rules in district court. The district court ruled in favor of the NMB, and US Airways sought a federal appeals court review.

**January 1998**

Members elected stewards who were trained to assist their co-workers with grievances and other job issues.

**May 1999**

The Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit invalidated the September 1997 election results, citing the employer's First Amendment rights. US Airways then refused to continue negotiations and no longer recognized the union. CWA filed to re-run the election and asked the NMB to mail out ballots on July 1 for an August 1 count. US Airways objected to an expedited re-run election but offered no justification.

**Summer 1999**

Management granted some of the contract terms negotiated by the bargaining committee, but passenger service employees remained the only work group without the protections of a union contract, especially in the areas of job security, benefits, and long-term career protection.

The NMB granted CWA's request for an expedited re-run election. Ballots were mailed out July 16, and votes were counted on August 20. Again, a majority (67 percent) of passenger service employees voted for union representation. (Of the 7,806 eligible voters, 5,254 voted for union representation.)

**November-December 1999**

The company and the union reached a first contract agreement with job security protections in the event of a sale or merger, pay increases, and substantial improvements in working conditions. Members ratified the contract on November 30, and it went into effect on December 13.

**April 2000**

US Airways announced a merger deal with United Airlines (UAL) that required government approval. US Airways management put their airline on "hold" for 15 months in anticipation of the merger.

**July 2001**

The US Department of Justice denied the UAL/US Airways merger request, citing anti-competitiveness.

**September 2001**

After the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, DC, all airlines were grounded for two days, and longer for those flying in and out of Washington Reagan International Airport and Dulles International Airport near Washington, DC. The airline industry was in a financial crisis, and airlines were losing millions of dollars daily. The federal government set up the Air Transportation Stabilization Board to make grants and loans to struggling airlines.

**October 2001**

US Airways began to implement furloughs. All told, almost 3,000 passenger service jobs were eliminated. CWA negotiated a voluntary furlough program that extended the length of recalls for furloughed employees.

**August 2002**

US Airways declared bankruptcy and threatened to use the court to make drastic changes to the contract. Agents resisted all the cuts proposed and eventually negotiated a contract that was ratified by almost 80 percent of members.

**April 2003**

US Airways emerged from bankruptcy. CWA-represented employees gained a seat on the board of directors and shares of stock in the corporation.

**Summer 2004**

As the company continued to struggle, several US Airways executives quit, taking almost \$7 million in severance and benefits with them. US Airways announced the airline wanted more concessions or it would go into bankruptcy again.

CWA won a "No 5% Cut" campaign to end the 5% Iraq War pay deferral for all US Airways employees.

**September 2004**

US Airways again filed for bankruptcy, and the judge allowed the company to cut workers' pay and benefits by 21 percent.

**October-December 2004**

In the first strike authorization vote by passenger service employees at any airline, 89 percent of US Airways passenger service agents voted to authorize a strike if management attempted to impose cuts not ratified by members. Management backed off of some of their most extreme demands, and negotiators reached an agreement. Agents ratified the new contract by 65 percent in December.

**May 2005**

US Airways and America West announced their plan to merge.

US Airways management announced a \$55 million plan to provide executive and management retention bonuses. CWA launched a petition against the plan that was signed by over 2,300 employees in four days.

**December 2005**

Passenger service agents at the former America West had organized with the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) in 2004. However, they had not reached a first contract with America West by the time of the merger. After the merger, CWA and IBT formed the Airline Customer Service Employee Association, CWA-IBT (known as the Association). In December, the unions signed an interim transition agreement that spelled out the transition of IBT members at the former America West into the CWA contract.

**May 2006**

US Airways announced plans to bring 600 previously outsourced reservations jobs back to the US.

**June 2006**

CWA and IBT signed a final transition agreement that included pay increases and other improvements for all the US mainline Express agents.

**March-April 2007**

US Airways announced it would distribute the first profit-sharing checks to employees, furloughed employees, and retirees. In April, the company announced it would hire more than 1,000 new employees. Most furloughed employees were recalled.

**March 2008**

The company distributed its first profit-sharing checks totaling \$49 million to US Airways employees after its second consecutive year of profits since merging with America West in 2005. Employees have received profit-sharing checks every year since 2008.

**Spring 2009**

The union won a system-wide grievance regarding skycaps doing passenger service work on the curb after US Airways began collecting fees for checked luggage.

**November 2010**

The 3,000 fleet and passenger service agents at Piedmont Airlines, a wholly-owned subsidiary of US Airways, voted in favor of union representation by CWA.

**July 2011**

Contract negotiations between the company and a newly elected bargaining team began.

**December 2011**

All negotiated "snapbacks" from the concessionary agreements made during bankruptcy were applied to all passenger service employees. These included:

- Paid sick days, snapback from 5 days per year paid at 50 percent to 12 days per year paid at 100 percent
- Paid or bid weeks of holidays snapback from 5 days to 10 days
- All shift and job premiums snapback to 100 percent
- All travel is paid at applicable rates including time and one half
- All overtime on a holiday is now paid at double time
- Customer service contact premium increases from 25 cents to 30 cents per hour for all members
- Vacation accrual snapbacks to 25 days in the 25th year, gaining 1 full week of vacation back

**February 14, 2013**

US Airways and American Airlines announced they would merge to form the world's largest airline.