

Airlines

TWU Alleges Teamsters Organizer Forged Authorization Cards at American Airlines

The Transport Workers Union July 23 filed with the National Mediation Board objections to a representation election being sought by the International Brotherhood of Teamsters at American Airlines, alleging that an IBT organizer forged authorization card signatures of workers.

The Teamsters, which denied TWU's charges, previously submitted a petition and authorization cards to NMB for an election to represent the carrier's 11,000 mechanics and related workers, currently represented by TWU (102 DLR A-11, 5/28/13).

TWU is an affiliate of the AFL-CIO, while the Teamsters is part of the Change to Win coalition of unions.

After examining the authorization cards, NMB directed TWU and the Teamsters to file challenges to the list of eligible voters provided by the Dallas-based airline and to raise objections on any other matters in the representation dispute.

As evidence in support of its claim that cards were forged by an IBT organizer, TWU submitted two affidavits, one from a second IBT organizer who was involved in the American Airlines campaign and one from a former employee of the Teamsters' Organizing Department who was in regular contact with organizers.

"While our declarants did not directly witness the commission of the forgeries, they were alerted to this misconduct by fellow organizers and other staff who either witnessed the misconduct or were made aware of it," TWU told NMB.

Forging authorization cards is not only a violation of NMB rules but also a criminal offense, according to TWU.

IBT Denies Any Wrongdoing. TWU said it had only limited information on how many forged cards were submitted or how they were processed. "[W]e have no evidence of any remedial actions undertaken by the IBT aside from taking the organizer primarily in question off of the American raid," TWU added.

TWU noted that the affidavits came from two IBT professional organizers and that they were not "spies" planted by the TWU within IBT's operations.

In copies of the affidavits that were publicly released, TWU blacked out the names of the two declarants and

of most witnesses named by them. But it submitted unredacted affidavits to NMB.

TWU urged NMB investigators to subpoena and interview the two former IBT officials "and the various witnesses" to obtain full evidence regarding the forgeries and accurately assess their impact on IBT's petition for an election.

If the allegations are confirmed, "NMB must remedy these violations and consider requiring the Teamsters to start their tainted drive over again," Frank McCann, TWU director of organizing, said in a separate statement.

In response, David Bourne, director of the Teamsters' Airline Division, issued a statement July 23 denying TWU's allegations.

"We deny any wrongdoing or knowledge of wrongdoing in the campaign by American Airlines mechanics and related workers to achieve Teamsters representation," Bourne said.

He said TWU's allegations are "a diversionary scheme to bring the Teamsters into public disrepute."

"The NMB is conducting its routine eligibility verification process, and we trust its findings will finally clear the way for the workers at American Airlines to choose new, strong representation," Bourne said.

IBT has not yet filed a formal response to TWU's charges but plans to do so, a spokeswoman said July 24.

Two Cards Received for Same Worker. In one affidavit, a former IBT organizer stated that he or she was told by another Teamsters employee that the organizer in question was not conducting routine home visits to the American Airlines workers he was assigned to visit. Instead the organizer in question "sat in his car and filled out house call sheets and falsely signed authorization cards" and submitted them to the union's organizing office in Tulsa, Okla., according to the affidavit.

In some cases, two authorization cards from the same American Airlines employee were received, one from the worker and one from the organizer, and the signatures did not match, according to the declarant.

In the second affidavit, the former Organizing Department employee said he or she was told by "multiple persons involved in the IBT raid at American Airlines" that a Teamsters organizer along with directors and coordinators "were involved in falsifying authorization cards and other related documents and concealing the facts from the NMB."

The former employee said Teamsters officials conducted an investigation and discovered the organizer

had falsified house call sheets and had turned in more than 480 authorization cards. Out of fear NMB might learn of the misconduct, IBT removed the organizer

from the American Airlines campaign and relocated him, the declarant said.

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