March 18, 2020

RE: Coronavirus update - Government Affairs

Dear Local Presidents,

As we continue to fight the coronavirus pandemic, I wanted to update you on the efforts our government affairs team have undertaken to protect TWU members’ health, safety, and jobs. Below is a summary of what our government has done and what we are asking them to consider on behalf of TWU members. We are encouraging all TWU members join this fight by calling their U.S. Senators at 202-224-3121 and demanding they pass a pro-worker coronavirus relief bill immediately.

Congress has discussed tackling the coronavirus in three phases. On March 6, the President signed into law phase one: $8.3 billion in spending for public health costs associated with the coronavirus. This spending is now reaching public health departments and research facilities working on a vaccine.

Phase two was passed by the House of Representatives on March 16: a bill focused on personal health. This bill (HR 6201) is currently awaiting action by the Senate and includes the following provisions.

- Federally funded free testing for individuals who may have been exposed to the coronavirus
- $1 billion for states to better administer unemployment insurance claims

Private sector workers at large companies have been exempted from the paid leave requirements. TWU has been fighting to broaden these provisions to include ALL workers. We have also been fighting to include an emergency temporary standard from the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA). This standard would require employers to implement new, more stringent safety standard for workers in the areas most likely to be exposed to the virus – including transportation workers. Unfortunately, both of these provisions were removed at the last minute at the request of Treasury Secretary Mnuchin.

The House and Senate are now constructing an economic stimulus package for the industries most effected by the drop in demand due to the
virus – specifically for airlines. This bill may be introduced as soon as today (March 18).

The **TWU is working with Congress to get $58 billion for airline workers.** This money would come with significant restrictions and federal oversight to ensure that workers receive these funds. TWU is asking that any airline that accepts this money:

- Direct all of it to frontline workers
- Be prohibited from breaking union contracts through bankruptcy for at least five years following the end of federal assistance
- Be prohibited from increasing executive compensation, buying back stock, outsourcing work, or lobbying against worker protections at any level of government for at least 5 years following the end of federal assistance

TWU has coordinated with the other aviation unions in these efforts. Together, we are asking for Congress to move as quickly as possible to get this money into the system and into workers’ pockets.

If you have any questions on the ongoing legislative fight, please contact Zack Tatz, Director of Government Affairs, at ZTatz@twu.org.

Thank you,

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TWU International Administrative Vice President
Air Division Director

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