UPS PILOTS VOTE TO AUTHORIZE STRIKE; UPS CAUTIONS VOTE IS "SYMBOLIC"

News / Airlines

United Parcel Service (UPS) Airlines pilots have voted to authorize a strike, though a number of steps remain before the flight deck crew can actually strike.

The 2,252-8 vote gives the executive board of the Independent Pilots Association (IPA), the union representing UPS pilots, the right to request a release from talks mediated by the US National Mediation Board (NMB). Only if NMB grants the release would the pilots be able to strike. NMB has scheduled talks in November and December, so the release request would likely not come until those negotiations have occurred.

Nevertheless, IPA believes the strike vote gives UPS's 2,500 pilots additional leverage and sends a message to UPS management and the public.

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IPA president Robert Travis noted in a statement that negotiations between UPS and the pilots have gone on for four years and "the company has failed to deliver a contract for its own pilots." He added, "In a clear voice, UPS pilots have said they are willing to strike if necessary to finish the job."

In a statement emailed to ATW, UPS Airlines spokesperson Mike Mangeot said, "Since we're still at the table under NMB supervision, there's no merit to any talk of a job action ... The vote is a symbolic gesture ... A strike is not possible without the NMB's permission, and then only after exhausting a lengthy series of safeguards."

He said UPS "continues to negotiate in good faith for a win-win contract ... We have every reason to believe we'll arrive at such an agreement, just as we have in all four previous UPS-IPA negotiations." Mangeot added that UPS operations won't be affected by the negotiations. "Any discussion of holiday disruptions is negotiations posturing," he said.

Travis said UPS "management is playing a risky game using 'stall and delay' tactics against its own people." He noted that FedEx Express pilots this week ratified a new six-year labor contract. "This deal brings labor peace to our main competitor," Travis said.

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