



P R E S S R E L E A S E

SOUTHWEST AIRLINES PILOTS' ASSOCIATION

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Southwest Airlines Pilots File Suit Against the City of Chicago for Squelching Free Speech

(DALLAS) – The union representing the pilots of Southwest Airlines on Tuesday filed papers in the Eastern Division of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois after officials at Chicago Midway International Airport denied ad space to the union. The union is seeking to buy advertising space at the airport to place a welcome message to Southwest Airlines shareholders as they arrive in Chicago for their May 18 meeting while highlighting facts regarding the company's financials. On Wednesday, both sides made preliminary oral arguments to the Honorable Virginia M. Kendall regarding a temporary order to place the ad at Midway.

"We are very disappointed by the city and airport's decision to needlessly silence our voice and deny our welcome message to shareholders," said SWAPA President, Captain Jon Weaks. "Our ad was described by the City's Department of Aviation as 'offensive' despite simply showing a pilot in uniform and mentioning the undeniable fact that shareholders have received over \$3 billion in stock buybacks from Southwest since the last pilot wage increase. We believe that is what is truly "offensive."

SWAPA believes that the City of Chicago has engaged in viewpoint discrimination, as is demonstrated by the fact that Chicago previously allowed advertisements in Midway and O'Hare airports on other supposedly "controversial" subjects, such as animal testing, agricultural policy, and climate change. SWAPA believes the City of Chicago uniquely singled out SWAPA's message because it disagreed with it, which is unconstitutional.

"Airline labor has fewer and fewer opportunities to have our voices heard as we operate under the antiquated Railway Labor Act," continued Captain Weaks. "For a city such as Chicago, with a rich history of labor support, to be hindrance to free speech is both unfortunate and concerning."

Southwest Airlines pilots have been without an acceptable contract since 2012. During that time, shareholders have been rewarded with \$3.1 billion in stock buybacks while the pilot group has not had a raise since 2011. Currently in federal mediation and awaiting an acceptable offer from Southwest management, hundreds of pilots will descend upon Chicago on May 18 to engage in informational picketing both on Michigan Avenue and near Chicago Midway airport.

Located in Dallas, Texas, the Southwest Airlines Pilots' Association (SWAPA) is a non-profit employee organization representing the more than 8,300 pilots of Southwest Airlines. SWAPA works to provide a secure and rewarding career for Southwest pilots and their families through negotiating contracts, defending contractual rights and actively promoting professionalism and safety. For more information on the Southwest Airlines Pilots' Association, visit www.swapa.org.

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