

Tentative Agreement Reached in Amtrak Negotiations

After working without a contract for more than eight years, the IBEW and three other unions signed an agreement with Amtrak on January 18. Following release of the report of Presidential Emergency Board (PEB) 242, the passenger railroad agreed to the majority of the unions' demands, including full retroactive back pay and no work-rule changes. "This is a big victory for our members and a big step forward for all of rail labor," said IBEW Railroad Department Director Bill Bohne.

Under the agreement, workers will get the back pay in two installments: 40 percent in the first year of the agreement and the remainder the following year. The more than 1,000 IBEW members at Amtrak will vote on the agreement within the next 60 days.

More than 10,000 Amtrak workers – represented by nine unions – have been without a contract since 2000. The bargaining stalemate was broken in October when the Amtrak Shopcraft Coalition – made up of the IBEW, the Transportation Communication Union, the International Association of Machinists, and the Transport Workers Union – were released from federal mediation (to read the joint coalition statement [click here](#)).

The five-member PEB, created by President Bush to recommend a settlement after the unions were released from mediation, sided with the unions' demands in their final report issued in December. "By rejecting Amtrak's proposals for dramatic work rule changes and supporting our members' demand for back pay, the Board's recommendations gave us a road map to a fair and just settlement," stated Mike Giansante, IBEW System Council No. 7 General Chairman responsible for Amtrak negotiations.

Lobbying blitzes by rail union representatives and members – which included more than 100 visits with congressional representatives – also played a major role in bringing Amtrak back to the bargaining table, Bohne said.

A second coalition of Amtrak unions – the Passenger Rail Labor Bargaining Coalition – and ARASA - the Supervisors' Union - also signed the agreement.

"It's been a long fight, but I think we are finally seeing the light at the end of the tunnel," Bohne said.

International President Ed Hill offered hearty congratulations to the bargaining team and the members at Amtrak. "It's been a long struggle, but the solidarity and patience of the members paid off," he said. "I salute the dedicated bargaining team that hung in there and won a good contract in the face of many obstacles. We look forward to a new and productive era at Amtrak."

To read a copy of the agreement, [click here](#).

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