

December 13, 2016

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500.

Dear Mr. President,

I write to urge you to reverse the Department of Transportation's decision to grant a foreign air carrier permit to Norwegian Air International, an Ireland-based subsidiary of Norwegian Air Shuttle. DOT's decision contradicts labor protection provisions in the US-European Union Air Transport Agreement, and creates a troubling precedent that could undercut the wages, benefits and jobs of airline workers throughout this country.

Like you, I believe that we must do everything possible to protect good-paying airline sector jobs in America from foreign carriers that employ unfair labor practices. That core principle was codified in the 2010 revised Article 17 of the US-European Union Air Transport Agreement, which says expanded transatlantic air service should not undermine labor standards or employee rights under the laws of a carrier's home country. Those provisions were included specifically to prohibit "flag-of-convenience" airlines from entering the transatlantic market – the same type of operations that decimated the U.S Merchant Marine and paved the way for the outsourcing of nearly 100,000 American jobs.

It is clear that creating a flag-of-convenience airline was precisely Norwegian Air Shuttle's intention when it established an Ireland-based subsidiary. After all, Norwegian Air Shuttle already has a permit to serve U.S. markets. However, by headquartering Norwegian Air International in Ireland, the subsidiary avoids Norway's stricter labor laws and collective bargaining obligations. This will allow Norwegian Air International to employ flight crews under individual, low-wage, short-term contracts through third party hiring agencies in Thailand – exactly the type of anti-labor behavior that Article 17 was meant to safeguard against.

Unless DOT's decision is reversed, it will be an open invitation to other foreign carriers to create flag-of-convenience subsidiaries, threatening the middle class jobs of thousands of flight attendants, mechanics, pilots and other airline workers in our country. We must do everything we can to prevent a global race to the bottom in the airline industry.

Thank you for your consideration of this request, and I very much look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



BERNARD SANDERS  
UNITED STATES SENATOR