

Airline Unions Picket, Take Their Cases Straight to the Public

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There's no doubt that U.S. domestic airlines are in a precarious position right now, welcoming back a surge of travelers but getting caught up in a staffing shortage that has resulted in thousands of delays and cancellations.

Now their unions, which are seeking higher pay, are taking advantage of the situation.

Unions are pleading their cases directly to the flying public, either through pickets at airports or through electronic communications.

Southwest Airlines pilots, for instance, picketed on Tuesday outside Love Field in Dallas – Southwest's home base – seeking a new contract and holding signs that blamed airline management for delays and cancellations that have riled passengers, according to a story by the Associated Press.

It's clear that the unions, which the AP pointed out have very little legal ground to stand on to strike, are trying to leverage the situation by gaining public sentiment. Hence, a very public picket in the searing Dallas heat as passengers arrived for their Southwest flights.

And it's not just Southwest.

The Air Line Pilots Association last week posted a letter on its website aimed at Delta Air Lines passengers, saying it sympathized with fliers who have been inconvenienced by the delays and cancellations and, like Southwest pilots, putting the blame squarely on Delta management.

Delta, the union claimed, has scheduled more flights than it has pilots for, and pilots are working an inordinate amount of overtime.

"It's a struggle every day out there," said Casey Murray, president of the 9,000-member Southwest Airlines Pilots Association. "Our fatigue rates reflect that."

