

Federal judge sides with SPEEA, bridge benefit issue heads to trial



WICHITA – A federal judge today (Dec. 11) rejected The Boeing Company’s request to dismiss the lawsuit by the Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace (SPEEA), IFPTE Local 2001, seeking bridge benefits for employees released after the company sold its commercial airplane operations in Wichita and Oklahoma City in 2005.

In a 49-page opinion, U.S. District Judge Monti Belot overruled Boeing’s argument that there was not enough evidence to call for a trial. Claims by SPEEA, later joined in the lawsuit by the International Association of Machinists (IAM), that Boeing broke its contract and violated federal employee-benefits law can now continue to trial.

SPEEA seeks to restore the ‘bridge benefits’ which provided early retirement medical and pension benefits for employees age 49 to 55 with 10 years of Boeing service. Boeing denied the benefits to hundreds of union-represented employees as a result of the sale.

“This was an appalling breach of trust,” said Ray Goforth, SPEEA executive director. “We look forward to the court ordering Boeing to honor the commitments it made to employees.”

SPEEA represents 3,001 engineers, technical workers and other professionals at Spirit AeroSystems in Wichita. A local of the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE), SPEEA represents 26,400 aerospace professionals at Boeing, Spirit AeroSystems in Kansas, Triumph Composite Systems, Inc., in Spokane, Wash., and BAE Systems, Inc., in Irving, Texas.

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