

SPEEA executive director proposes a new way to negotiate union contracts with Boeing



SEATTLE – Recognizing the need to avoid disruption to airplane production, the union representing nearly 22,000 engineers and technical workers at The Boeing Company is proposing the two sides use binding binary interest arbitration to resolve fiscal differences during the next round of contract talks. Agreement to the proposal eliminates the possibility of a strike or lockout.

Existing SPEEA contracts with Boeing expire Dec. 2, 2011 for 600 engineers in Wichita and Oct. 6, 2012 for 21,000 engineers and technical workers across the western United States.

In binding binary interest arbitration, the union and company create negotiation rules that submit any fiscal disputes to an independent arbitrator who, like a judge, decides the issue. The dispute is reduced to fact-and-data-driven arguments. The arbitrator’s decision is final.

The innovative proposal was outlined to the union’s 150-member governing council Saturday morning (June 11) by SPEEA Executive Director Ray Goforth. SPEEA is holding its annual convention in Seattle this week.

“Interest-arbitration isn’t perfect, and it’s not appropriate if either the union or the employer intend to use raw power to gain more at the bargaining table than they could otherwise justify to a neutral arbitrator. But if both sides intend to be reasonable and rational, interest-arbitration is a way to solve fiscal disputes without the collateral damage that comes from a strike or lockout,” said Goforth.

“We have a responsibility to show leadership.” Goforth continued. “Our national polity is currently engaged in a series of heated conflicts about the rights of corporations versus organized labor. Our national economy is teetering on the edge of a double-dip recession. The national momentum points to conflict and chaos. Rather than get swept up in that momentum, we can charter a different model of dispute resolution. Boeing is an aerospace leader. Boeing has the chance to partner with SPEEA to become a labor-relations leader.”

Full text of the speech is available on the SPEEA website at: www.speea.org.

A local of the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE), SPEEA represents 24,600 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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