PILOTS CONDUCT LARGEST PICKET IN HISTORY OF BUFFETT'S NETJETS

News / Business aviation

Any lingering doubts about the NetJets Association of Shared Aircraft Pilots' (NJASAP) commitment to securing a contract that recognizes the world-class safety, security and service they provide to **NetJets** customers were put to rest Thursday. Approximately 800 pilots and members of their families gathered at seven **picket** sites across the country to send a message: Wages that barely keep pace with inflation and a diminished health care package are unacceptable. An independent labor advocate, NJASAP represents the professional interests of the pilots who fly in the service of NetJets, a Berkshire Hathaway subsidiary (NYSE: BRK.A and BRK.B).

"So often in a contract negotiation, management teams shrug off the Union's position as little more than bargaining-time rhetoric," NJASAP President Pedro Leroux said. "Last Thursday, the NJASAP Membership clearly communicated their elected leaders and Negotiating Committee are speaking and acting on their behalf."

What makes the convergence of almost 800 pilots in seven cities – Columbus, Dallas, Scottsdale, Seattle, Teterboro, Van Nuys, and West Palm Beach – remarkable is that it represents the vast

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majority of members who were able to attend. At any one time, approximately 50 percent of NJASAP's members are performing flight duty. Those who were unable to attend donated more than 4.2 million hotel points, 2.5 million airline miles and $10,000 in cash to help others make the trip.

Following the June 1 departure of former NetJets CEO Jordan Hansell, Union and Company leaders agreed to an expedited bargaining schedule with the intent of reaching a tentative agreement in 90 days. The parties quickly cleared a number of sections from the docket, however, progress stalled once discussions turned to wages, retirement and health care benefits. "The faces may be new in the executive suite, but they are singing the same tune," NJASAP Vice President Paulette Gilbert said. "In terms of our health care, for example, in addition to shifting additional costs to the pilot group, they also want to cut the benefits we have."

The NetJets **pilots** have made their position on health care abundantly clear: Lesser benefits for more money is a non-starter. "Health care cuts hurt real families, and while it may be the trendy thing for CEOs to slash, it is inconsistent with the [Warren] Buffett way," Leroux said.

NJASAP and NetJets have been engaged in contract negotiations since June 2013, and, in early May, began bargaining with the assistance of a National Mediation Board-appointed mediator. The Union applied for mediation in early April. "Although we have been in contract negotiations for more than 800 days and would very much like to see the process conclude, NJASAP will not rush into an agreement that fails to recognize the world-class product our members provide each and every duty day," Gilbert said. "NetJets expects the very best from us, and, in return, they want to give us the very least. It is an equation that simply does not add up."

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