

Written Testimony by:

CYNTHIA RAMAKER

An Interested Party before the House Oversight & Government Reform
Committee Field Hearing

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Location: County Council Chambers,
The Lonnie Hamilton Building,
4045 Bridge View Drive,
North Charleston, South Carolina

WRITTEN TESTIMONY

My name is Cynthia Ramaker. I am an employee of Boeing based in North Charleston, South Carolina. I am one of the employees who is attempting to intervene in the case involving the Boeing Company, the International Association of Machinists and the NLRB regarding Boeing's South Carolina operations. I reside in Ladson, SC. I have lived in South Carolina since 1975. My family also lives in South Carolina. I moved to South Carolina from New Jersey when my father was transferred by the Air Force. My statements here are true to the best of my knowledge and recollection of the facts and events surrounding the NLRB case.

Before working at Boeing, I was a police officer in Charleston County Police Department until 1989. I then worked for Daimler-Chrysler until about 2006. In April 2006 I was in the first in group to be hired by Vought Aircraft, a manufacturer with a Charleston facility that assembled two aft sections of large Boeing aircraft. I was a voluntary member of the IAM from the time the union first got in until it was decertified. I was a Vought employee until approximately July, 2009, when Boeing bought the Vought facility. Since then I have been a Boeing employee.

When I went to work at Vought in 2006, the IAM had not yet made any contact with employees. The IAM was interested but there were only 25 or so employees. In 2007 IAM organizers began soliciting Vought employees, with a door-to-door campaign. The union was eventually voted in the spring of 2008.

After the union got in, it began contract negotiations with Vought. I did not have a role in the contract negotiations between Vought and the IAM. I was a union member from the beginning. The IAM did not inform employees concerning the importance of issues being negotiated with Vought. At some point, the IAM must have known the contract it was

negotiating was likely to be rejected because the meeting in November 2008 at which the contract was to be ratified was billed as a normal union meeting with no mention of a ratification vote. The IAM knew that if it said a contract was being voted on workers would show up at the meeting and reject the contract. The IAM was desperate to get a contract signed. I recall the IAM assuring employees that any bad things in the contract would later be improved. I, myself, made similar arguments to employees in an attempt to convince them that no matter what was in the contract, we would be stronger with it than without it.

Of all the union members in the unit only 13 attended the contract ratification meeting. Those few in attendance ratified the IAM's contract by vote of 12-1. All of the provisions of the new IAM contract were worse than what Vought employees already had without a contract. The IAM upper leadership itself did not monitor the Vought negotiations. Employees lost medical, dental, and short term disability. Additionally, dues were set to increase, although this requirement was later reduced due to the strong backlash in the unit. The Vought employees' dissatisfaction with the IAM's actions surrounding the contract and the contract, itself, only increased when workers were laid off in the weeks following the new contract.

After the contract ratification, employees attempted to contact IAM leaders concerning the contract. The IAM Grand Lodge representatives held one meeting and then we had no contact from the IAM Leadership for four months. Nobody was even able to make contact with union leadership during that time. IAM came back into the picture in about March or April 2010. Around this time, I was voted in as Local President and continued in that position until about September 2009, when the union was decertified. There was nothing I could do with respect to influencing union leadership or reassuring employees about our future under the new contract

and with the union. I tried to promote a positive attitude towards the union despite the enormous dissatisfaction in the plant.

In 2009 I became President of IAM Local Lodge 787. As Local President, I got to see what was going on behind the scenes with the union. The experience was embarrassing and humiliating. I believe I was at that time the only IAM woman local president, and I believe this made my dealings with IAM leadership in Seattle even more difficult. On various occasions, Union leadership in Seattle made public very negative, humiliating comments concerning the South Carolina unit and South Carolina workers, generally. These comments appeared in the newspaper in Seattle and Charleston.

In July 2009, it was announced that Boeing had bought the Vought facility. Soon after Boeing took over, we had an initial meeting between the union leadership and Boeing executives. That meeting left me with the impression the relationship between Boeing and the union was going to be a successful one and that Boeing was keen to begin negotiations on a new contract which could improve on the previous one that employees were so unhappy about.

Having said that, I was not surprised by the Unfair Labor Practice filed by the IAM in Seattle/Everett against Boeing. They are violating my right to work with a choice. Isn't that what being an American is all about: a choice? That is MY right! They made it perfectly clear to us that they did not want the 787 built here in South Carolina.

After Boeing bought the facility, I was aware of a petition being organized to decertify the union. I had no role in the signature gathering for the decertification petition. During the months leading up to the decertification, I was concerned about how I would be treated if the union was decertified, both by the company and my fellow employees. I expected to face retaliation from

the company after my role as union president. I was completely wrong about this. Before the decertification election, one of my supervisors told me that whatever the result was, all he cared about was that we do our jobs, and that my role as union president would not affect how I was treated by the company at all. He also told me to inform him if any employee mistreated me. None did.

The decertification election was held on September 10, 2009, and the IAM was voted out by a tally of 199-69. After the decertification of the IAM, work continued as normal. In the only communication on the subject that I recall coming from Boeing, the company thanked employees for “giving the company the chance to work together.” With respect to pay and terms of work, we were placed within the normal Boeing cycle.

Recently, the union has again made contact with employees through home visits. The campaign was very poor in comparison to the first one several years ago.

The Boeing Campus in North Charleston, SC is divided into three production buildings. The former Vought facility is now identified as Building 88-19. It is the Aft-Body Manufacturing building where Sections 47 and 48 are made.

Next is the former Global Facility, now known as Building 88-20. This is Mid-Body Assembly Facility where the mid-body sections are flown in from Italy and mated with the center wing section brought in from Japan. Once all the sections are joined and mated with the center wing section, the remainder of the systems components and wiring are installed completing the center third of the aircraft.

The newest facility is the Final Assembly and Delivery Building, also known as FA&D. This is where the forward third of the aircraft is brought in from Spirit Aircraft in Kansas, the

Mid-Body brought in from Building 88-20, the Aft-Body section from Building 88-19 as well as the wings from Japan and Horizontal stabilizer from Italy. All the sections are then combined to create a complete 787 Dreamliner aircraft. The interiors will come from the IRC facility being completed a few miles away, and also be installed at FA&D.

Building 88-19 is currently staffed by about 1200 employees. Building 88-20 is currently staffed by about the same amount. FA&D currently has somewhere in the range of 800 to 1000 employees with 10 classes going around the clock with several hundred more employees preparing to work in the FA&D building. When it is fully staffed, FA&D will employ some 3800 employees.

I work in a building usually called “off-site warehouse” where the 787 parts are received. I am a quality inspector. I inspect the incoming parts before they are issued to production. I also inspect and ship parts to Everett. It is my responsibility to resolve any issues with the parts before they go to the program.

Thousands of people will be unemployed if the NLRB complaint is successful. All of our work is for the 787. Losing my job at Boeing will be personally catastrophic to myself and the workers at the North Charleston Boeing facility. We are home-owners, we have families that will be affected. I understand that the NLRB General Counsel’s remedy in this case will force Boeing to discontinue the final assembly and delivery work in Charleston, and transfer it to Seattle. This remedy is grossly unfair and would devastate our community and thousands of families. That is why I decided to intervene in this case. I and two of my fellow employees are being represented by attorneys from the National Right To Work Foundation. So far, we have not been allowed to become full participants in the case. It seems neither the Judge nor the Government, nor the

Union think we even have a legal interest in this case.

It is an absolute certainty that many Charleston-based employees including me, will lose our jobs with Boeing in South Carolina if the General Counsel's proposed remedy is adopted. Boeing is one of the best employers in this area. I would like to continue working for Boeing, but if the 787 program is moved to Washington I will not be able to accept a relocation offer. Apart from my family and personal obligations, I would not accept an offer which would force me to join a union in order to have a job. Here, at least people have a choice. There, they have none. We should not be penalized for not wanting a union. The union doesn't want the program here, period. There was zero support from the IAM in Everett for the South Carolina workers even when we had a union. From what I understand, no one there lost his/her job, no lines were closed down. Actually more people have been hired. Where do you show retaliation?

One union official went on the public record and said that he would try to keep work from coming to our plant in Charleston because of the decertification. There were numerous negative comments made by union leaders in Seattle about South Carolina, the education of the workers here, and how it would be impossible for us to successfully build the Dreamliner.

I have chosen to exercise my rights as a citizen of the United States to live and work in South Carolina. Our personal experience with the IAM has been very bad. Although I have nothing against unions, in principle, I strongly believe that membership in a union and representation by a union should not be compulsory. We had a union in our plant. The majority of employees did not want to be represented by that union so it got voted out. Now it seems we are being punished for that choice. I strongly believe that employers should not be told by the federal government or a union where they can establish their operations. If Boeing thinks it can

get the job done more profitably and successfully in South Carolina, that's Boeing's decision to make.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Cynthia D. Ramaker

My name is Cynthia D. Ramaker. I was born in Savannah, Georgia. My dad was in the Air Force so we traveled around a lot. Moved to Charleston in 1975 and have lived here most of my adult life. I am the oldest of three kids in our family.

I have a son, a daughter and two fantastic grand-kids. My family is the most important part of my life. I love to work in my garden, help with the local animal rescue, go fishing on occasion, cook, watch a good movie on a rainy day and travel to extreme destinations. Alaska has been my vacation spot for the past three years and I can't wait to go back. I have always been fascinated by airplanes and would like to learn to fly one day.