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KENNEDY CELEBRATES AMTRAK AGREEMENT

We are here to celebrate a landmark in labor-management relations. The settlement that's been achieved is an extraordinary achievement that will benefit all the members of the Amtrak community—the employees, the company, the passengers, and the entire country. Compromise is never easy, but I commend both sides for their commitment and fortitude in seeing these negotiations through to an agreement.

After eight long years without a pay raise, Amtrak's employees have finally won a contract that grants them the fair wages and benefits they deserve and that reflects their indispensable contributions to Amtrak and the nation. The leaders standing here today were serious about negotiating a contract that both sides can be proud of.

The union leaders held their ground, and they have delivered an agreement worthy of the hard-working men and women who keep the trains running every day.

The settlement is a victory for the executives as well, who can now focus on maintaining Amtrak as the world-class passenger rail service the nation needs in the 21st century. The agreement gives the company the peace and stability it needs to build a stronger future and to attract the best workers in the nation.

Finally, this settlement is also a victory for the Amtrak passengers, the commuters, and the public, who can be confident that Amtrak will be able to keep improving its service on trains that run on time.

Such a victory could not have come at a more auspicious time. Last year, Amtrak had its highest ridership ever, with nearly 26 million passengers overall, including more than 2 million in Massachusetts. The American people have more confidence in Amtrak than ever before, and this contract will enable the company and its workers to build on that trust.

All of us who have followed this issue hope and expect that this breakthrough agreement marks not only the beginning of a new era for Amtrak and its employees, but also the beginning of a new era in labor-management relations across America that can revitalize our economy and bring economic justice to tens of millions of hard-working men and women in industries and communities throughout our country. Thank you all very much and well done, Amtrak.

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