

Southwest Airlines makes new voluntary leave offer to cut costs

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Southwest Airlines Co said late on Tuesday it was offering employees another round of voluntary leave as its staffing levels remain high and the coronavirus outbreak crimps travel.

“Southwest remains overstaffed in many areas. As a result, some departments will be offering additional opportunities for Employees to take Extended Time Off beginning in March 2021, based upon projected staffing levels”, the company said in an email to Reuters.

“The additional opportunities for leave align with the period when some Employees will return from previously-awarded, six-month leaves on March 1, 2021”, the company added.

Bloomberg reported earlier that 791 Southwest pilots have agreed to take off one to three months.

The “Big Four” U.S. airlines – Delta Air Lines, American Airlines, United Airlines and Southwest – have also asked for additional bailouts.

The U.S. Treasury Department this month began distributing \$15 billion in new payroll assistance to airlines, money allocated by Congress to help more than 32,000 aviation workers return to jobs through at least March 31.

Southwest had said it expected to receive \$1.73 billion in total.

Last month, the company said it had issued notices to 6,828 employees warning them that they could be furloughed.

(Reuters)