

Southwest Announces 2022 Executive Leadership Plans

DALLAS — Today, [Southwest Airlines Co.](#) (NYSE: LUV) announced that Chairman and CEO [Gary Kelly](#) will transition roles in early 2022, becoming the carrier's Executive Chairman with the desire to serve in that role through at least 2026 at the discretion of the Board of Directors. Executive Vice President Corporate Services [Robert Jordan](#) will become Kelly's successor as CEO effective Feb. 1, 2022. Jordan also will join the Board at that time.

"On behalf of the Southwest Airlines Board of Directors, I am delighted to announce Bob Jordan as CEO," Kelly said. "Bob and I have worked side by side for more than 30 years. He is a gifted and experienced executive and well-prepared to take on this important role. Working closely with President Tom Nealon and Chief Operating Officer Mike Van de Ven, we will begin developing transition plans in the coming weeks and months. These three top-notch Leaders make for a powerful team to lead us forward."

Serving as CEO since 2004, Kelly, 66, has led Southwest through some of the airline industry's most turbulent times. Kelly is a 35-year Southwest veteran who began his career at Southwest Airlines as Controller, moving up to Chief Financial Officer and Vice President Finance, then Executive Vice President and CFO, before being promoted to CEO and Vice Chairman in July 2004. He assumed the roles of Chairman and President in 2008. In January 2017, Kelly relinquished the title of President and named former Southwest Board Member and Executive Tom Nealon to the executive team as President. Prior to joining Southwest Airlines in 1986, Kelly was a CPA for Arthur Young & Company in Dallas and Controller for Systems Center, Inc.

Kelly has often said his biggest source of pride is the fact that Southwest Airlines has never had a single layoff or furlough in the airline's 50-year history. As CEO, he has guided the airline's transformation through several major initiatives, including the acquisition of AirTran Airways, the repeal of the Wright Amendment, the launch of international destinations for the first time in Southwest's history, the installment of a new reservation system, introduction of a new frequent flyer program, debut of the new Heart brand and livery, initiation of the long-awaited service to Hawaii, and the introduction of the Boeing 737 MAX 8 into the airline's fleet—all while staying true to the Company's core values and People-centric Culture.

"The airline has a strong Leadership team, and the Board has always taken seriously its role to oversee a strong succession plan for the top Leadership roles," said William Cunningham, Southwest's Lead Director on the Board. "Gary has been an outstanding CEO for Southwest for nearly two decades and has developed an excellent group of Senior Leaders to shepherd the airline into its next 50 years. We are thrilled he is willing to continue to serve as the Board's Executive Chairman, subject to the annual elections process. Bob inherits a solid strategy and great momentum to continue the airline's recovery as the COVID pandemic wanes. Bob has the Board's full support."

Jordan, 60, is a long-time Southwest Executive with broad and deep experience. Joining the airline in 1988, he has served in roles including Director of Revenue Accounting, Corporate Controller, Vice President Procurement, Vice President Technology, Senior Vice President Enterprise Spend Management, Executive Vice President Strategy and Technology, Executive Vice President and Chief Commercial Officer, AirTran President and Executive Vice President Corporate Services. During his tenure, he has led numerous significant transformational projects, including the acquisition of AirTran Airways, the development of the new southwest.com e-commerce platform, the Rapid Rewards loyalty program, and our enhanced boarding process. Most recently, Jordan led the efforts for the Company's voluntary leave and early separation programs, which were key to reducing the airline's labor expenses during the pandemic and instrumental in avoiding layoffs and furlough actions.

Prior to Southwest, Jordan worked for Hewlett-Packard as a programmer and financial analyst. He holds bachelor's and master's degrees from Texas A&M University. He joined Coppell-based The Container Store's Board of Directors in 2013 and currently serves as its Lead Director. He and wife, Kelly, live in Flower Mound and have two adult children and two grandchildren.

"I'm humbled, honored, and excited to be asked to serve as the next CEO," Jordan said. "The Heart of Southwest is our People; they make the difference for our Customers, and I look forward to serving them. We have a terrific team of Leaders, many of whom I have had the joy of working alongside for decades. I'm looking forward to working with Gary, Mike and Tom on the transition effort and setting up Southwest for the next 50 years of giving Customers the Freedom to Fly."

ABOUT SOUTHWEST AIRLINES CO.

In its 51st year of service, Dallas-based [Southwest Airlines Co.](#) continues to differentiate itself from other air carriers with exemplary Customer Service delivered by more than 56,000 Employees to a Customer base that topped 130 million Passengers in 2019. Southwest has a robust network of point-to-point service with a strong presence across top leisure and business markets. In peak travel seasons during 2019, Southwest operated more than 4,000 weekday departures among a

network of 101 destinations in the United States and 10 additional countries. In 2020, the carrier added service to Hilo, Hawaii; Cozumel, Mexico; Miami; Palm Springs, Calif.; Steamboat Springs; and Montrose (Telluride/Crested Butte), Colo. Thus far in 2021, Southwest has initiated service to Chicago (O'Hare) and Sarasota/ Bradenton, both on Feb. 14; Savannah/Hilton Head and Colorado Springs, Colo., both on March 11; Houston (Bush) and Santa Barbara, Calif., both on April 12; Fresno, Calif., on April 25; Destin/Fort Walton Beach on May 6; Myrtle Beach S.C., on May 23; Bozeman, Mont., on May 27; and Jackson, Miss., on June 6. The airline will begin service to Eugene, Ore., on Aug. 29; Bellingham, Wash., on Nov. 7; and Syracuse, NY, on Nov. 14.

The carrier issued its [Southwest® Promise](#) in May 2020 to highlight new and round-the-clock efforts to support its Customers and Employees well-being and comfort. Among the changes are enhanced cleaning efforts at airports and onboard aircraft, along with a federal mandate requiring every person to wear a mask at all times throughout each flight. Additional details about the Southwest Promise are available at [Southwest.com/Promise](#).

Southwest coined [Transfarency®](#) to describe its purposed philosophy of treating Customers honestly and fairly, and low fares actually staying low. Southwest is the only major U.S. airline to offer bags fly free® to everyone (first and second checked pieces of luggage, size and weight limits apply, some carriers offer free checked bags on select routes or in qualified circumstances). Southwest does not charge change fees, though fare differences might apply.

Southwest is one of the most honored airlines in the world, known for a triple bottom line approach that contributes to the carrier's performance and productivity, the importance of its People and the communities they serve, and an overall commitment to efficiency and the planet. Learn more about how the carrier gives back to communities across the world by visiting [Southwest.com/citizenship](#).

Book Southwest Airlines' low fares online at [Southwest.com](#) or by phone at 1-800-I-FLY-SWA®.

Media Contacts:

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ABOUT SOUTHWEST AIRLINES CO.

[Southwest Airlines Co.](https://www.southwest.com) operates one of the world's most admired and awarded airlines, offering its one-of-a-kind value and Hospitality at 121 airports across 12 countries. Southwest took flight in 1971 to democratize the sky through friendly, reliable, and low-cost air travel and now carries more air travelers flying nonstop within the United States than any other airline(fn. 1). By empowering its more than 73,000(fn. 2) People to deliver unparalleled Hospitality, the maverick airline cherishes a passionate loyalty among more than 134 million Customers carried in 2025. Southwest leverages a unique legacy and mission to serve communities around the world including harnessing the power of its People and Purpose to put communities at the Heart of its success. Learn more by visiting [Southwest.com/citizenship](https://www.southwest.com/citizenship).

1. Based on U.S. Dept. of Transportation quarterly Airline Origin & Destination Survey as of Q4 2025
2. Fulltime-equivalent active Employees as of March 31, 2026

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