

## **11 Senators, 7 Representatives Urge Babbitt, FAA Not to Weaken Safety Legislation**

Buffalo, New York- October 20, 2010 - The 'Families of Continental/United/Pinnacle/Colgan Flight 3407' praised members of both houses of Congress who sent strong messages last week to FAA Administrator Randy Babbitt not to give in to industry pressure to accept a rulemaking advisory committee proposal that would effectively cripple a critical aviation safety measure that was recently signed into law. The committee, dominated by the airlines and special interests, recommended that the FAA work around a Congressional provision intended to require all first officers on commercial airlines to possess the same Airline Transport Pilot (ATP) license as that required of captains, by allowing classroom training to substitute for 1,000 of the 1,500 flight hours required for the license.

"Congress was trying to send a twofold message with this legislation; first, that passengers on regional airlines deserve a much higher level of experience in the cockpit, especially when compared to that of the major airlines, and secondly, that a young pilot's first job out of flight school should not be at a regional airline with human lives in the back of the plane in their hands," stated Susan Bourque, of East Aurora, New York, who lost her sister, prominent 9/11 widow and activist Beverly Eckert, on Flight 3407. "Obviously the airlines are more worried about their bottom lines instead of safety and are back to their old tricks of trying to manipulate the FAA, as they have successfully done with previous administrations. We are so grateful to the members of Congress who have remained vigilant, even in the midst of recess for mid-term elections, to ensure that the FAA implements this important safety legislation with passengers and safety as the clear number one priority."

The group recognized a bipartisan effort in the House of Representatives by Rep. Louise Slaughter (D-NY), Rep. Brian Higgins (D-NY), Rep. Chris Lee (R-NY), Rep. Russ Carnahan (D-MO), Rep. Tim Holden (D-PA), Rep. Rush Holt (D-NJ), and Rep. Bob Inglis (R-SC), who sent a letter to Babbitt and Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood calling the proposal 'misguided' and declaring that 'there is simply no practical comparison between classroom hours and flight hours'. On the Senate side, Senator Charles Schumer (D-NY) led the charge in condemning the recommendation as 'outrageous', stating that Congress was 'crystal clear' in demanding a minimum of 1,500 hours of actual hands-on experience. Previously, Schumer, Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Sen. Joseph Lieberman (I-CT), Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Sen. Robert Casey (D-PA), Sen. Olympia Snowe (R-ME), Sen. Ron Wyden (D-OR), Sen. Scott Brown (R-MA), Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Sen. James Risch (R-ID), and Sen. Roland Burris (D-IL) had sent a letter to Babbitt asking him to use 'maximum restraint' in 'substituting flight school curriculum for actual in-flight hours'.

"It took fifteen determined months of walking the halls to get this legislation passed and signed into law in the first place, but clearly our work is not done," declared Scott Maurer of Moore, South Carolina, who lost his thirty year old daughter Lorin. "The law is only as strong as the regulations that it produces, and we are learning every day what a challenge remains ahead of us in the rulemaking process. In honor of Lorin and all of our loved ones, we will continue to fight for what is right, and we appreciate the unwavering support of the Aviation subcommittee leadership in both houses, as well as of so many rank-and-file Members, who recognize the importance of achieving a true 'One Level of Safety' for all passengers, regardless of whether they fly with a major carrier or a regional airline."

The group also announced that it would have a strong presence at the National Transportation Safety Board's upcoming symposium, entitled 'Airline Code-Sharing Agreements and Their Role in Aviation Safety'. The symposium will be held next Tuesday and Wednesday, October 26th and 27th, and will feature numerous representatives from both major and regional airlines.

"Just as with their safety forum on Professionalism in Aviation, the NTSB is once again very timely in holding an event like this with a focus on such a critical issue like code-sharing," stated John Kausner of Clarence Center, New York, who lost his twenty-four year old daughter Ellyce. "We appreciate the airlines who have agreed to participate in this, because having a public dialogue on the impact of code-sharing on safety is necessary to the flying public's awareness of this practice. More importantly however, we are looking for this dialogue to be translated into action, as we continually challenge regional airlines to raise their commitment to safety and training to the level of their parent carriers, and for the parent carriers to take more interest in how their regional partners operate on a day-to-day basis. Elly and all the other passengers on Continental/United/Pinnacle/Colgan Flight 3407 had no idea of the difference between Continental and Colgan when they stepped on that plane, and we remain dedicated to making sure that such an inexcusable tragedy is never allowed to happen again."