

Buffalo, New York- March 31, 2011 – As the House Rules Committee voted along party lines to disallow a move to strike the controversial Shuster amendment from being considered on the House floor, the 'Families of Continental Flight 3407' appealed to all members to vote 'NO' on the amendment when the House considers the FAA Reauthorization Bill on the floor today and tomorrow.

"Safety should be a non-partisan issue, and we have been blessed to have broad bipartisan support throughout this whole process," stated Karen Eckert of Williamsville, New York, who lost her sister and prominent 9/11 activist Beverly Eckert on Flight 3407. "However, as we are seeing with financial reform and health care, legislation is one thing, but the true teeth of a provision lie in the regulation. Regardless of the alleged intent at this point in time, this provision has the potential to cripple all the safety initiatives that are currently underway as a result of our tragedy, as well as all future FAA safety rulemakings. So much is at stake here - over time this amendment if passed could easily have a slippery slope effect as future groups like us press for the FAA to be responsive to safety deficiencies. We cannot sit back quietly and allow this special interest legislation to be railroaded through the House."

The families are particularly concerned about the legislation's adverse impact on the current FAA rulemaking on pilot fatigue, which has been on the NTSB's Most Wanted List for over twenty years, and which if completed would result in significant progress towards alleviating fatigue risks with regional airline pilots. Rep. Shuster originated the legislation at the behest of cargo and nonscheduled carriers who were not pleased with the FAA's direction on the fatigue rulemaking, and who had initially pushed for a blatant, explicit exemption from the fatigue rulemaking as part of the Senate's FAA Bill. Curiously, the legislation actually adds layers and levels of complexity to the FAA's regulatory process, which seems in direct contrast to recent Congressional initiatives to roll back and minimize government bureaucracy.

"In a vacuum, you could try to make the case that this measure is benignly intended to 'improve' the FAA's rulemaking process, as the amendment explicitly states," added John Kausner of Clarence Center, New York, who lost his daughter, Ellyce. "However, when you take into account what the cargo and NACA lobbyists have been up to as they've been scurrying around the Hill since this rulemaking was introduced and they didn't get their way last September, we are simply not buying that line. This legislation is simply catering to their special interest and campaign contributions, with safety unfortunately simply an afterthought. This is going to be a tough vote for all members - there is absolutely no way to get around that this is a choice between the little people like us, who are just trying to right a wrong after the fact, and an aggressive lobbying sector of the industry."