

House Aviation Subcommittee Hearing Raises Serious Concerns About Some Members' Commitment to Safety

Buffalo, New York - February 12, 2014 – As the members of the 'Families of Continental Flight 3407' prepare to gather tonight to remember their loved ones tragically lost five years ago when Continental Flight 3407 operated by regional carrier crashed into a home on Long Street in Clarence Center, New York, group members had a strong message for some in the airline industry and Congress who have seemingly already forgotten the painful lessons learned on that February evening in 2009. Recent quotes in newspaper articles and comments made by House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee members at last Wednesday's hearing raised serious concerns about their commitment to ensuring that passengers flying on the nation's regional airlines receive a true 'One Level of Safety' compared to those flying on the mainline carriers.

"These new safety guidelines haven't even been in place for six months and here we go again with the airlines and their lobbyists running around proclaiming that the sky is falling to any member of Congress or journalist who will listen," stated Scott Maurer of Moore, South Carolina, who lost his thirty year old daughter Lorin. "Words cannot come close to describing both the pain of Lorin's loss that my wife and I feel every day five years later, and the incredible disappointment that we have in airline CEO's or members of Congress who feel that these critical new safety measures are 'hammering' the airlines or that we already need to go ahead and 'nullify' them. Clearly some people are more worried about protecting Jeff Smisek's seven-figure bonus than making sure that someone's daughter flying into Altoona, Pennsylvania or Greensboro, North Carolina has a well-rested and well-trained pilot. And that laissez-faire approach to letting some regional airlines cut every possible corner is exactly why Lorin and so many other wonderful people are no longer with us."

An NTSB investigation into the crash of Flight 3407 revealed serious safety concerns about the day-to-day operations of regional carrier Colgan Air (a subsidiary of Pinnacle), and highlighted the fact that every fatal commercial airline crash in the U.S. since 2001 occurred on regional carriers. As a result of the NTSB recommendations and numerous hearings, in 2010 Congress unanimously passed a sweeping aviation safety bill aimed at raising the level of safety for these smaller carriers. In the past year, new science-based scheduling guidelines aimed at preventing pilot fatigue as well as a requirement for all new-hire regional airline first officers to have significantly higher levels of experience and training prior to being hired have gone into effect, and the Federal Aviation Administration has also instituted enhanced requirements for

airline pilot training programs in terms of stall training and the increased use of flight simulators. Other provisions from the law that are next to be enacted include a federal electronic pilot training records database as well as a rulemaking on airlines' safety management systems.

"We appreciate Congressman LoBiondo's unwavering commitment to safety in picking up right where his committee leadership predecessors Congressmen Mica and Petri left off, and certainly there has been continued strong support on the other side of the aisle in the transition from former Congressmen Oberstar and Costello to Congressmen Rahall and Larsen," stated Karen Eckert of Williamsville, New York, who lost her sister and 9/11 widow and activist Beverly Eckert. "Back in the immediate aftermath of this horrible and clearly preventable tragedy, amid numerous congressional hearings, there was no doubt on either side of Capitol Hill on both sides of the aisle that a significant gap in safety had been allowed to develop between our nation's mainline and regional carriers, and that strong governmental action was required. Five years later, it is tremendously disappointing to see how fickle some lawmakers have become as corporate campaign contributions overshadow the grassroots advocacy effort of citizen groups like ourselves. Sadly, this has been the airlines' secret to success in avoiding stronger safety regulations for so many years. If only these new safety guidelines would be allowed to run their course and the free market to work its magic, the forward-thinking and well-run airlines would thrive, and the shortcut-taking airlines would be forced to step up their games or to move over and let someone else take their spot. And the end result would be a stronger and safer U.S. commercial aviation system, a positive ending to the horrible price that our loved ones paid as a result of shortcomings in regional airline safety."