

## Large Pool of Potential Pilots Exist; Airlines Need to Step Up to Make Profession More Attractive

Buffalo, New York - February 28, 2014 – The 'Families of Continental Flight 3407' reacted strongly to today's Buffalo News article (<http://www.buffalonews.com/city-region/pilot-shortage-tied-to-low-wages-gao-report-finds-2014-0227>) detailing a Government Accountability Office report on pilot supply as a counter to recent airline claims that new regional airline safety rules were to blame for an alleged 'pilot shortage'. In particular, the group highlighted the report's finding that 'Data indicate that a large pool of qualified pilots exists relative to projected demand, but whether such pilots are willing or available to work at wages being offered is unknown.'

"Finally this sets the record straight with regard to the scare tactics that stakeholders like the Regional Airline Association, United, and JetBlue have been throwing around on Capitol Hill as their excuse for why they are canceling flights and cutting service to small communities," declared Scott Maurer of Moore, South Carolina, who lost his thirty year old daughter Lorin in the crash. "From day one, our motto has been to 'Put the best pilots in the cockpit and set them up for success,' in how you screen them, schedule them, hire them, and even compensate them. We saw in our crash how paying a first officer \$16,000 a year resulted in her making the potentially risky choice of living at home in Seattle and commuting through the night to her Newark base. Those wages did not set her up for success as she entered the cockpit of Flight 3407 and proceeded to repeatedly yawn throughout the flight, right up until the moment that she was faced with a critical split-second decision regarding the flaps. It is time for the airline industry to step up to the plate and acknowledge that they are the culprits when it comes to why Great Lakes Airlines can't find any first officers to work for \$14,616; the pilots are definitely out there."

The new regional airline safety rules, addressing the issues of pilot fatigue, entry-level pilot qualification requirements, and airline pilot training programs, came about as a result of legislation unanimously passed by Congress back in 2010. The family group cited a statement at a House Aviation Subcommittee hearing by Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-OR) in support of the new pilot qualification rule, where he declared, "... they (the new rules) are always going to cost something, but what I always say is I have never met someone at 40,000 feet who is thrilled that they saved a dollar on their ticket because the pilot up front is just learning how to fly."

“We cannot allow the airlines to lose sight of the fact that pilots are safety professionals who have the lives of our loved ones entrusted to their care every single time they step into that cockpit,” stated Susan Bourque of East Aurora, New York, who lost her sister Beverly Eckert, a noted 9/11 widow and activist. “For the years of rigorous training that they go through to prepare themselves to fly in the Part 121 environment, the lives of our loved ones demand that they are treated accordingly. The issue of pilot wages at the regional airline level has always been the elephant in the room, and for the regional airline industry to take the next step when it comes to achieving a true ‘One Level of Safety’ with the mainline carriers, this issue must be properly addressed. Make no mistake about it, our loved ones paid the ultimate price as a result, and we are not going to let anyone forget that, lest the same mistake be revisited on another group of families and friends.”