

Industry Continues to Shift Blame to Regulations as Culprit for Regional Airlines' Inability to Find Pilots to Work for Food Stamp-Level Wages

Buffalo, New York - April 29, 2014 – In a show of support for new federal aviation safety guidelines geared at avoiding a repeat of the tragic and avoidable crash of Continental (now United) Flight 3407, the 'Families of Continental Flight 3407' will attend Wednesday morning's House Aviation Subcommittee hearing. The hearing, to be held at 10 a.m. in Room 2167 of the Rayburn House Office Building, will focus on air service to small communities, at airports served almost exclusively by regional airlines. The family group will also make rounds on both sides of Capitol Hill to highlight a recent Government Accountability Office (GAO) report on Pilot Supply that exposed the myth being propagated by the airlines that there are not enough ATP-licensed pilots to fill their cockpits.

"You are seeing a tried-and-true page out of the airline industry's lobbying playbook being put into full effect - just stay the course with the campaign contributions and the behind-the-scenes pressure, and over time you will get what you want," declared Scott Maurer of Moore, South Carolina, who lost his thirty year old daughter Lorin in the crash. "Unfortunately we have some bad news for them: five years later, we are not relaxing and we are certainly not going away. We are going to continue to stand up for the traveling public who deserve what Lorin and our loved ones sadly did not receive, a true 'One Level of Safety' for every passenger boarding a flight operated by a regional airline. And we are most definitely not going to allow them to scare everyone in Washington with their dire predictions of a pilot shortage, not when the GAO report makes it clear that the issue is not whether there are enough ATP-licensed pilots out there, it's whether the airlines are going to continue to drive them away with food stamp-level compensation."

Maurer was referring to industry efforts in the past few months to sabotage recently-implemented regulations regarding pilot fatigue, entry-level hiring qualifications, and airline pilot training protocols. The new rules came about as a result of a landmark regional airline safety bill that was unanimously passed by both houses of Congress and signed into law by President Obama back in August 2010, bipartisan legislation engineered by the leadership of both the House and Senate Aviation Subcommittees. Despite the unanimous passage of the law, some veteran members appeared to waffle on their support of the safety provisions at a House Aviation Subcommittee hearing back in February.

“With the way the political landscape constantly shifts here in Washington, it is imperative that we keep showing up and reminding any members who may be wavering five years later why this bill made such strong sense to everyone back then, and should continue to do so now; namely that safety must always come first,” stated Karen Eckert of Williamsville, New York, who lost her sister Beverly Eckert, a noted 9/11 widow and activist. “Regardless of how economically tempting certain positions may be when it comes to the airline industry's bottom line or a member's reelection campaign war chest, the fact remains that these critical safety provisions were the right thing to do back in 2010 and they remain the right thing to do now. We ask anyone who feels otherwise to take a minute to think of their loved ones - their spouse, parents, children, siblings - and imagine having them taken from you by a needless and preventable tragedy like this one. We are counting on our elected representatives here in Washington to challenge the regional airlines to step up their game when it comes to safety, not to cut them more slack like they did in the decade leading up to Flight 3407.”