

Call for Congress to Hold the Line on 'Quality AND Quantity' Approach to Pilot Qualifications

Buffalo, New York - April 30th, 2015 - The 'Families of Continental Flight 3407' cheered the powerful message conveyed by aviation safety expert and Miracle on the Hudson pilot, Captain Chesley 'Sully' Sullenberger, at Tuesday's Senate Aviation Subcommittee hearing, continuing their strong push to ensure that Congress does not cave in to industry pressure to relax regional airline safety standards in the upcoming FAA Reauthorization Bill. They also kept their focus on this afternoon's House Aviation Subcommittee safety roundtable, which will once again feature Captain Sullenberger and representation from the Regional Airline Association.

“Captain Sullenberger knocked it out of the park about why these safety standards pertaining to regional airline first officers are significant, as they simply reflect what the airline industry historically has looked for experience-wise in entry-level pilots,” declared Scott Maurer of Brandon, Florida, who lost his thirty year old daughter Lorin in the crash. “Just as importantly, he speaks strongly to the fact that the flying public deserves BOTH quality AND quantity in the preparation of entry-level pilots; it is not the either-or proposition that the airlines and their lobbyists cleverly seek to portray it as. We have learned the hard way that our aviation system is only as strong as its weakest link, and it is so important that Congress stand by these critical safety measures, so that we can continue to challenge the weakest link regional airlines to elevate their standards. Every set of statistics that we have seen continue to show that there are certainly more than enough qualified pilots out there; now it's about the regional airlines creating a system of wages and working conditions that make it attractive for these pilots to work there. And the industry can not forget that it is going to take more than just one or two years for some of these airlines to rebuild how they are perceived by Congress, the industry, those considering careers in the industry, and most importantly, the flying public.”

The House Aviation Subcommittee's Roundtable, entitled: "Ensuring the Safety of Our Nation's Aviation System", will be held today at 2:00 pm in Room 2167 of the Rayburn House Office Building. Having been designated as a roundtable, no webcast will be provided and no written transcript will be kept.

"We are so appreciative of Chairman LoBiondo and Ranking Member Larsen for convening this important event, and of course call on them to remain resolute in the face of industry lobbying

pressure," stated Susan Bourque of East Aurora, New York, who lost her sister Beverly Eckert, a prominent 9/11 widow and activist. "The 'Miracle on the Hudson' provides a stunning contrast to both Flight 3407 and the Air France tragedies regarding the value of airmanship, decision-making, and hand-flying skills, some of which are not always learned in academic or structured training environments. We have learned the hard way the importance of a pilot being vetted in multiple environments or by multiple employers prior to being entrusted to flying people's loved ones in the back of a commercial airliner, and this FAA's revised ATP Certification Program offers a comprehensive approach to making that possible. Captain Sullenberger and his extensive experience and knowledge of the industry continue to stand as a strong counterbalance to the industry and the lobbyists looking for any means possible to continue the status quo of the regional airline industry and the shortcuts that some of its members have come to represent."