

Maintain Laser Focus on Pilot Qualifications, Records Database; Challenge Congress Not to Cave to Airline Pressure

Buffalo, New York - September 30th, 2015 - Responding to the House and Senate passing a six month extension prior to a September 30th deadline for the Federal Aviation Administration to be reauthorized, the 'Families of Continental Flight 3407' renewed their call for Congress to take a strong stance in support of safety in its next proposed FAA Reauthorization Bill. First and foremost, the group reminded congressional leaders of its staunch opposition to any attempts by the Regional Airline Association to water down FAA's recently-implemented higher pilot qualification standards for regional airline first officers.

"As time marches on, we continue to fight for a true 'One Level of Safety' between our nation's mainline and regional carriers, something which my daughter and everyone else on Flight 3407 was sadly denied," stated John Kausner of Clarence Center, New York, who lost his twenty-four year old daughter Ellyce when the plane crashed less than one mile from his family's home. "While the regional airlines and their lobbyists may look at this six-month extension as an opportunity to continue to operate in the shadows in the hopes that Congress will give in to their slick maneuvering on the pilot qualifications rule, we intend to be as vigilant and vocal as ever in ensuring that the committee and subcommittee leadership puts the safety of the flying public first. Any weakening of this critical safety measure would send the regional airlines the absolutely wrong message and only serve to promote the same complacency that plagued the industry during the previous decade."

The group also reiterated its response last month to an audit released by the Department of Transportation Inspector General's office detailing FAA's lack of progress in implementing an electronic pilot record database, where it had harsh words for both the FAA and commercial airlines, which were found to not be taking the appropriate interim steps to compliance. The database project was mandated by Congress in the unanimously-passed Airline Safety Act of 2010, in response to NTSB recommendations driven by the crash of Flight 3407.

"No matter how full of a plate FAA feels that it may have, we can never let anyone forget what happens when slippage is allowed to occur or when the ball is dropped when it comes to staying on top of every phase of the safety process" stated Karen Eckert of Williamsville, New York, who lost her sister Beverly Eckert, a prominent 9/11 widow and activist. "No one ever

suggested that rule making was easy, but hopefully this IG report will create the pressure from Congress and the traveling public that FAA needs to get this project on the right track. FAA's 2023 target date is absolutely unacceptable. Just as disappointing, however, is FAA's failure to take the appropriate interim steps to ensure that airlines are maintaining the proper records in the meantime and requesting all available pilot records in the hiring process. We are counting on Administrator Huerta and his staff to take immediate and decisive corrective actions on this report's recommendations."

The group also zeroed in on findings in the report (<https://www.oig.dot.gov/sites/default/files/FAA%20Pilot%20Records%20Database%20Progress%20Final%20Report%5E8-20-15.pdf>) that cast doubt on whether the nation's commercial airlines were living up to their end of the deal on the FAA's 2009 Call to Action, the Agency's initial response to addressing some of the gaps in regional airline safety exposed by the NTSB's investigation into the crash of Flight 3407. At the time, airlines pledged to request a pilot's complete record in the hiring process, as opposed to the more cursory requirements of the Pilot Records Information Act (PRIA), which led to Colgan Air hiring the captain of Flight 3407 without knowledge of all his prior training deficiencies.

"Obviously FAA needs to step up its game, but we certainly can't let the airlines continue to hide behind the FAA as they love to do either," stated Scott Maurer of Brandon, Florida, who lost his thirty year old daughter Lorin in the crash. "Once again, we have convincing proof that voluntary compliance is nothing more than lip service; if FAA doesn't require something by rule, then you can bet your bottom dollar that some of the bottom feeders in the airline industry will allow critical safety responsibilities to slip through the cracks. Meanwhile, these are the same airlines working behind the scenes with their lobbyists and senior safety officials on the FAA Reauthorization Bill and FAA Advisory Committees trying to get already-enacted critical safety measures watered down. This cannot be allowed to happen, and six and a half years later, we remain as committed and watchful as ever to ensuring that the mistakes that led to the needless tragedy of Flight 3407 are never allowed to repeat themselves."