

## **RAA Conveniently Forgets That Flight 3407 Pilot Was Initially Hired by Regional Airline with Only 600 Hours of Flight Time**

Buffalo, New York - December 3rd, 2015 - Responding to a Regional Airline Association media campaign to pressure the FAA to roll back a safety rule that has been in effect for barely two years, the 'Families of Continental Flight 3407' rallied to the defense of a landmark aviation safety law that has resulted in our nation's safest period of travel on regional carriers.

"Public Law 111-216, the Airline Safety Act, has resulted in 2,486 days and counting of no other father having to grieve for his daughter who was lost in a needless and very preventable tragedy due to the glaring safety gaps in some of our nation's regional carriers back in 2009," stated Scott Maurer of Palmetto, Florida, who lost his thirty year old daughter Lorin. "This comprehensive law, which included provisions focused on pilot qualifications, screening, training, and fatigue, was the result of the unanimous support of Congress in concert with the Federal Aviation Administration and the Department of Transportation. When combined with the heightened scrutiny of the flying public, it has forced some of the 'bottom feeder' regional airlines to step up to the plate when it comes to safety, and we have six-plus years of no fatal crashes as a result. Those results should speak for themselves as to the effectiveness of this law, and it would be absolutely irresponsible for any branch of our government to reverse course and send these regionals a message that they can revert back to their old methods that resulted in 6 fatal crashes in the previous decade. Hopefully Secretary Fox, Administrator Huerta, Chairmen Thune and Shuster, and Ranking Members Nelson and DeFazio will continue to stand up for the safety of the flying public and resist the back-room maneuvering of these airline lobbyists."

The group was referencing recent media coverage detailing a Regional Airline Association proposal to water down strengthened entry-level qualification requirements for new-hire regional airline first officers, proposing additional entry-level training for their new hires in their place.

"We hearken back to the powerful testimony of Captain Sullenberger at the Senate and House hearings last spring, as to why these heightened experience requirements are so critical to ensure that aspiring regional airline first officers are better-prepared and more fully vetted prior to entering a cockpit with our loved ones in the back of their plane," stated Karen Eckert of Williamsville, New York, who lost her sister Beverly Eckert, a prominent 9/11 widow and activist. "We find it very ironic that the RAA proposal contains so many elements of the Airline Safety Act, including mentoring and stall and upset recovery training, some of which have not yet been completely put into place by the FAA. As we look at their proposal, glaringly absent are any ideas to address the salary, working conditions, and career path issues that Captain

Sullenberger correctly pointed out was the root cause of the industry's difficulty in attracting young pilots. Instead, here they are coming to the government with their hands out looking for a bailout. It just seems to us that if these programs are the gold standard of preparing young pilots, these regional airlines should implement them because it's the right thing to do; not just to secure some concessions from FAA or Congress."

Finally, the group addressed a continued RAA talking point about the Airline Transport Pilot (ATP) certificate requirement being unnecessary because both of the pilots on Flight 3407 had well over the ATP-mandated fifteen hundred hours of flight time prior to the crash.

"The only thing that 'baffles' us is that these regional airline CEO's and their hired-gun lobbyists continue to conveniently forget that Flight 3407's pilot was hired by one of their association's members for his initial Part 121 job with only 600 hours of experience," 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. "Had the current requirements been in place at the time, and the pilot been required to attain additional flight experience and seasoning, it is very possible that this additional vetting may have kept him from ever setting foot in the cockpit of a commercial airliner. For decades, our nation's mainline carriers have required their pilots to possess an ATP. The results speak for themselves: There have been no fatal crashes on our nation's mainline carriers in the last 15 years. To us, having a true 'One Level of Safety' between our nation's mainline and regional carriers demands that regionals make the same commitment to, and investment, in safety and training that the mainline carriers do, and this is just one means of making that a reality. Of course, no reporter or government official should take our word for it; instead they should just ask Captain Sullenberger and First Officer Skiles - their efforts in the 'Miracle on the Hudson' resoundingly prove that experience does matter, and that this First Officer Qualifications rule is truly vital for enhancing the safety of the traveling public."