

Family Group Calls on T&I Committee to Resist Any Amendments to Water Down Higher Safety Standards

Buffalo, New York - February 5th, 2016 - Following Wednesday's unveiling of the FAA Reauthorization Bill (Aviation Innovation, Reform & Reauthorization (AIRR) Act) by the House's Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, the 'Families of Continental Flight 3407' recognized the chairmen of the full committee and subcommittee, Rep. Bill Shuster and Rep. Frank LoBiondo, for resisting industry pressure to water down recently-enacted stronger entry-level requirements for regional airline first officers. Along with the support of House Democrat leaders Rep. Peter DeFazio, the ranking member of the full T&I committee, and Rep. Rick Larsen, the ranking member of the Aviation subcommittee, the group called on the 'Big Four' to fight against any efforts in committee or on the floor of the House to introduce amendments on behalf of the regional airlines.

"First and foremost, we would like to recognize Chairmen Shuster and LoBiondo, and their staff, for allowing us to engage in this process throughout the past year, and most importantly, for coming down strongly on the side of the safety of regional airline passengers by not giving in to attempts to roll back these important safety requirements," stated Karen Eckert of Williamsville, New York, who lost her sister Beverly Eckert, a prominent 9/11 widow and activist. "Now we must shift our focus to ensuring that no 11th hour amendments are snuck into this bill, either in mark-up or on the floor. We have received assurances that Chairmen Shuster and LoBiondo will vote against any such proposals, but even more importantly, we call on them, along with Congressmen DeFazio and Larsen, to use their bully pulpits on transportation issues within their caucuses to actively ensure that this does not occur."

The group also highlighted provisions in the bill focused on getting the FAA to ramp up its efforts to fully implement a long-overdue pilot records database, as well as addressing concerns regarding the deterioration of stick-and-rudder flying of this generation of commercial airline pilots due to the heavy reliance on automation in today's commercial airliners. The pilot training records database was part of a unanimously-passed aviation safety bill back in 2010, and was intended to address concerns about airlines not having access to a pilot's complete training record in the hiring process. In the aftermath of the crash of Flight 3407, the CEO of Pinnacle Airlines (now Endeavor Air) testified before Congress that the captain of the flight would not have been hired had his complete training record been available as part of his application.

"We were also pleased to see a deadline for FAA to once and for all put the pilot records database into operation, as well as some initial steps taken to deal with the recent IG Report focused on the potential adverse effect of cockpit automation on pilot's manual flying skills,"

stated Scott Maurer of Palmetto, Florida who lost his thirty year old daughter Lorin. "However, make no mistake about it, we will only support this bill if it continues to uphold these critical new first officer experience requirements. Any proposed amendments seeking to roll back, water down, or provide any other shortcuts into a regional airline cockpit will be vigorously opposed by us. We call on the regional airline industry to throw its energy and resources into embracing these new requirements and coming up with ways to fulfill our continually stated goal of 'Putting the Best Pilots in the Cockpit, and Setting Them Up for Success.'"