

## **House T&I Committee Approves FAA Bill That Does Not Water Down Stronger Pilot Qualification Standards**

Buffalo, New York - February 12th, 2016 - The 'Families of Continental Flight 3407' issued the following statement to mark today's 7th anniversary of the crash. The group also recognized the House's Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure for not including any amendments in the proposed FAA Reauthorization Bill that would shortcut more stringent entry-level pilot qualification requirements that came about as part of legislation that unanimously passed both houses of Congress back in 2010 in the aftermath of this tragedy.

"Today, as we do every day, we wake up to sadness and emptiness as we reflect on our loved ones who were so needlessly taken from us seven years ago. It remains utterly devastating to think of their final moments, and more importantly, all of the missteps along the way that allowed this horrible event to occur.

As time marches on, it becomes easier for some to demean our efforts to make sure this never happens again as being misguided or uninformed. The old saying about never criticizing someone until you walk a mile in their moccasins comes to mind; however, we remain determined to do everything in our power to ensure that these very same people never have to take the lonely walk that we have.

From 2001 through 2009, and likely dating back even prior to that, there was a decline in the commitment to and investment in safety by our nation's regional airlines when compared to their mainline partners. Unfortunately Flight 3407 became a tragic manifestation of that. Colgan Air, with its parent carrier Continental seemingly looking the other way, failed miserably in how it screened, trained, scheduled, and resourced its pilots, and our loved ones paid the ultimate price for it.

Through the collaboration of Congress, FAA, DOT, and many other stakeholders, Public Law 111-216 was unanimously passed back in 2010, and was enacted to address many of these gaps between regional and mainline carriers. Besides raising the traveling public's awareness of regional carriers in general, it took aggressive steps to ensure that all commercial airline pilots were better prepared to meet the challenges of flying in these modern times.

The results speak for themselves. We note with both sadness and pride that today marks seven full years with no fatal crashes on U.S. Part 121 commercial airlines, nearly tripling the previous longest crash-free period. While some might argue that this is proof of why P.L. 111-216 and its provisions were not needed in the first place, we firmly believe that it is the strongest evidence possible that the law, and the increased scrutiny that it has placed on our nation's regional carriers, has been supremely effective. And we challenge our nation's lawmakers, and their transportation counterparts in the executive branch, to continue to uphold these higher standards.

There has been quite a debate in terms of these new qualification requirements for entry-level pilots. While there are certainly no absolutes in terms of determining when a pilot is truly prepared to fly a plane with people's loved ones in the back of the plane, we remain firmly in agreement with the safety professionals who believe that more, not less, experience is needed, in developing both airmanship skills and a sense of professionalism. Furthermore, with the ever-increasing amount of automation in the cockpit, it is absolutely critical that we maintain a laser-like focus on ensuring that all pilots of both today and tomorrow have the manual flying skills needed to be able to react in emergency situations.

As we look ahead, we continue to challenge our nation's regional airlines to step up to the plate in supporting their pilots with state-of-the-art training and safety management programs that were not available to the crew of Flight 3407. We challenge all stakeholders to put the safety of the flying public ahead of all other interests. And we promise to remain as vigilant as ever, in honor of our loved ones, doing our part to ensure that our skies remain as safe as possible."