

## **Pledge to Continue to Fight to Protect Stronger First Officer Qualification Requirements**

Buffalo, New York - July 14th, 2016 - The 'Families of Continental Flight 3407' had a very measured response to Wednesday's news that the Senate had followed the House in passing an FAA extension through September 2017. The family group applauded Congress for resisting pressure from regional airlines to water down strong new entry-level first officer qualification requirements enacted in 2013 as well as for taking other positive steps in the implementation of the 2010 Airline Safety Act. However the group also issued a stern warning to the regionals and their congressional allies that it would continue to carry on its impassioned fight for a true 'One Level of Safety' between the nation's regional and mainline carriers into 2017 and the 115th Congress.

"Make no mistake about it, in upholding these critical first officer qualification requirements, this FAA extension once again spotlights the powerful testimony of Captain Sullenberger before Congress last spring," stated Scott Maurer of Palmetto, Florida, who lost his thirty year old daughter Lorin. "Anyone walking out of that Senate hearing clearly recognized what an important step Congress and the FAA had taken in raising the bar for regional airlines and their entry level hires, both qualitatively and quantitatively. Now that the regionals' lobbyists and their allies in the Senate have shown their cards as to how they want to work an end run around these higher standards, it is imperative that we continue to fight for the best interests of the flying public. In the memory of Lorin and all our loved ones who were needlessly lost, we firmly resolve do just that. In the meantime, it is our fervent hope that the regional airlines will shift their focus and energies from fighting these new higher standards to finding ways to elevate the profession of a regional airline first officer, including initiatives that touch on partnerships with both flight schools and mainline carriers, as well as continuing to advance the entry-level and recurrent training provided by all regional carriers."

The group recognized Congress for including in the extension an April 2017 deadline for the long-awaited FAA implementation of an electronic database of pilot training records to assist commercial airlines in the hiring process. It also praised a House-led effort to get the ball rolling on addressing the impact of advanced technology in the cockpit on pilots' manual flying skills.

"Obviously holding the line on the first officer qualification requirements will always be at the forefront of our efforts," stated Susan Bourque of East Aurora, New York who lost her sister and noted 9/11 widow Beverly Eckert. "But this extension also marks an important step in pushing FAA to bring this pilot record database project to fruition, along with the critical transparency in the hiring process that it will provide. We call on Administrator Huerta to step up to the plate in

delivering on this very overdue NTSB-directed safety initiative. Finally, kudos to Congressmen Shuster, DeFazio, LoBiondo, and Larsen for responding to the January DOT Inspector General report on automation in the cockpit and taking the first steps to ensure that this challenge is appropriately addressed by our commercial aviation system moving forward."