

## **Movie Contrasts Recent Reports of Airline Attempts to to Get Huerta, FAA to Cave In on Stronger Pilot Qualification Requirements**

Buffalo, New York - September 9, 2016 - Amid rumors of regional airlines and their lobbying associates working the FAA and the media in an attempt to create momentum for watering down more stringent entry-level qualification standards for first officers, the 'Families of Continental Flight 3407' praised the premiere of the critically-acclaimed movie 'Sully' as a reminder of the importance of experience when it comes to piloting a commercial airliner. Recent reports in the media shed light on an airline-driven effort by an FAA-chartered working group to sway FAA Administrator Michael Huerta towards relaxing strong new hiring requirements that were unanimously enacted by Congress back in 2010.

"We could not have asked for better timing when it comes to the release of 'Sully'," stated Scott Maurer of Palmetto, Florida, who lost his thirty year old daughter Lorin. "As the airlines and their representatives sit in a back room here in Washington and contrive their latest scheme to provide the lowest possible threshold for a first officer to fly in the right seat of a commercial airliner, the entire flying public is treated to the heroic story of what is possible in an emergency situation when you have two pilots with the highest levels of experience in the cockpit. With no technology to rely on or to bail them out, Captain Sullenberger and First Officer Skiles drew on their years of training and experience to come through in one of the most difficult scenarios imaginable. It serves as a vivid reminder of the powerful testimony to both houses of Congress by Captain Sullenberger last spring that 'Experience Matters'."

Just one month apart, the 'Miracle on the Hudson' and the crash of Flight 3407 provided a stunning contrast of pilots responding to adverse situations. The crew of Flight 3407, with a captain who had been hired for his initial job at a regional with only 600 hours of flight time and with numerous training deficiencies subsequent to that, was unable to recognize and react to a low airspeed warning, which ultimately led to the fatal crash.

"As Captain Sullenberger and First Officer Skiles have repeatedly emphasized to both Congress and the flying public, there is a significant benefit to young pilots receiving additional hand flying experience and exposure to adverse conditions prior to being brought into the Part 121 environment," stated Karen Eckert of Williamsville, New York who lost her sister and noted 9/11 widow Beverly Eckert. "Although university-based flight schools provide high-quality training, they are unable to expose aspiring pilots to certain difficult operating conditions due to liability concerns. And we learned the hard way with Flight 3407 what happens when a pilot is overreliant on cockpit technology. We agree with subject matter experts like Captain Sullenberger and First Officer Skiles who continue to maintain that Congress and the FAA

struck the proper balance in requiring additional flight experience and screening prior to entering the cockpit of a regional airliner, while also rewarding the training provided to military pilots and graduates of accredited college flight programs."

Finally, the group continues to be frustrated by airline efforts to blame challenging economic conditions at regional airlines on the new qualification requirements, while conveniently overlooking decades of poor pilot pay for first officers as well as the record profits being recorded by mainline carriers.

"It is absolutely unconscionable that the FAA and our government should even be considering a bailout of regional airlines like Great Lakes Airlines," declared John Kausner of Clarence Center, New York, who lost his twenty-four year old daughter Elly. "You can't spend 20 years doing the bare minimum when it comes to training and maintenance and treating your pilots like fast food workers and then go running to your senator for help when no one wants to fly for you. The solution does not lie in giving these airlines a pass when it comes to the experience and preparation of their new-hire first officers. Instead it should entail challenging them to step up their game in how they train and support these young pilots. It seems to me that there is plenty of money being made by baggage fees and low fuel prices that could easily be shifted in that direction."