

Flight 3407 Families Raise Alarm on FAA Advisory Committee's Backdoor Efforts to Weaken Pilot Qualification Requirements

Buffalo, New York - September 7, 2017 - In the midst of being fully engaged in the FAA Reauthorization process underway in both Houses of Congress, the 'Families of Continental Flight 3407' group was forced to take a detour amid reports that an industry-dominated Aviation Rulemaking Advisory Committee (ARAC) under the auspices of the FAA was in the process of finalizing a proposal that would include a recommendation to eliminate or water down critical new regional airline pilot qualification requirements unanimously enacted by Congress in the wake of the crash of Flight 3407 back in 2009.

"It feels like a never-ending game of Whac-a-Mole," stated Scott Maurer of Palmetto, Florida, who lost his thirty-year-old daughter Lorin. "Eight long years of trudging to Washington on our own dime to fight the good fight in honor of Lorin and all the other victims who were lost in such a preventable tragedy, and all the while the regional airlines continue to pour millions of dollars into the coffers of their lobbyists to do everything possible to weaken these new safety initiatives. You reach out to so many offices in Congress to make sure they know who Lorin is and why we continue to be here, and right when you feel that you are starting to make some headway, you find out that the regionals are trying to make an end run around the whole process. Just when I thought things couldn't get any slimier or grimier here in Washington, lo and behold you have these regionals and their lobbyists 'advising' a federal agency on what needs to be done to make their clients' lives easier. For the little people like us as well as every single citizen who boards a regional airline, I don't know how I could state it any more plainly than, 'This stinks'. Hopefully those in Congress who put the interest of the flying public and safety first will get FAA, DOT, and the White House on speed dial and put them on notice that this is not a good idea."

The family group was referring to an Aviation Rulemaking Advisory Committee that was chartered in April by the Trump administration under the title of 'ARAC Input to Support Regulatory Reform of Aviation Regulations.' The final recommendations are to be considered for approval by the committee at its September 14th meeting. This effort could allow the regional airlines and their lobbyists to bypass the legislative process where they have run into considerable resistance in their attempt to water down strict new qualification requirements for new-hire first officers at the regional airline level that were unanimously enacted by Congress in 2010.

"We've taken the lessons of our sister and her fellow 9/11 citizen advocates who went before us to heart, and we've truly tried to exemplify our government being of the people, by the people,

and for the people, as our founding fathers intended," declared Karen Eckert of Williamsville, New York, who lost her sister Beverly Eckert, a noted 9/11 widow and activist. "There is nothing we can do to bring Beverly and all the others back, but their memories have inspired us to carry on and make sure that these mistakes are never allowed to be made again. To allow an industry-dominated committee like this to essentially back-door what Congress has unanimously passed and the efforts that we have made would absolutely erode our faith in the principles that this country and government were founded on. As a former federal employee I have been involved in the rule making process, and in addition to considering the costs of a requirement like this, the government is also directed to take into consideration the health, welfare, and safety of the public. I can only hope that President Trump, Secretary Chao, Administrator Huerta, and their teams take this responsibility seriously and do the right thing in light of the lives that have been needlessly lost and the fight that has been nobly fought in their honor."