

Look Forward to Meeting with Chao to Make Case for Safety

Buffalo, New York - December 18, 2017 - Amid reports that Senate Commerce Committee Chairman John Thune was going to abandon his controversial legislative initiative that would weaken a key regional airline safety measure and instead push for the Trump administration to unilaterally implement his proposal, the 'Families of Continental Flight 3407' blasted Thune for bypassing the legislative process. They highlighted the sterling safety record that has been achieved as a result of landmark aviation safety legislation unanimously passed by Congress back in 2010 in response to the crash of Flight 3407, and called on President Trump and his transportation policy-makers to resist Thune's pressures and instead stand up for the safety of the American flying public.

"Senator Thune's maneuvers are the epitome of the hypocrisy here in Washington, and is exactly why Americans are fed up with this place," stated Scott Maurer of Palmetto, Florida, who lost his thirty year-old daughter Lorin. "For most of the nine years that we have been coming to Washington, we have heard Senator Thune rail against the executive branch ignoring the will of Congress. So now that he doesn't have the necessary support to get his plan to water down pilot qualifications through the Senate and the House, his solution is to seek what he would have denounced as blatant executive overreach just two short years ago. On a bill that was unanimously passed by both sides of Congress, and that has resulted in nearly nine years of no fatal crashes on U.S. commercial carriers, no less. For citizens like us who have attempted to bring about change and participate in our democracy in the way that our founding fathers intended, this is absolutely discouraging, as we see our government ignoring the will of the people and putting the priorities of the regional airlines and their lobbyists ahead of safety."

Thune's proposed amendment to the FAA Reauthorization Bill squeaked through the Senate Commerce Committee on a 14-13 vote but does not have the needed support to pass the full chamber. It encourages the FAA Administrator to lower the flight experience requirements for entry-level regional airline first officers, instead allowing for the substitution of classroom training. The captain of Flight 3407, who was hired for his first regional airline job with only 600 hours of flight experience, was unable to recover from a stall when the auto-pilot disengaged, resulting in a crash which took the lives of everyone on board, and one man on the ground.

"This is the Christmas season, and there will forever be an empty chair at the dinner table of our family and so many others," declared John Kausner of Clarence Center, New York, who lost his twenty-four year-old daughter Ellyce. "All because in the decade prior to the crash, our government looked the other way when it came to making sure that regional airlines were doing more than the bare federal minimums when it came to safety. We clearly don't have everyone at DOT and OMB on speed-dial like Senator Thune does, but we are calling on President

Trump and Secretary Chao to do the right thing in the interest of the safety of the American flying public. We were at Secretary Chao's confirmation hearing last January and have spent most of the past year attempting to connect with her face-to-face. The ninth anniversary of what should have been a very preventable crash is fast approaching this February, and what better time than that for us to sit down with her and share the importance of ensuring that in this era of increased technology and automation, that young pilots need more, not less, hand-flying experience prior to setting foot in that cockpit. If that was the case back in 2009, Flight 3407 might have had a very different ending and Elly would still be having Christmas dinner with us next Monday."