

Buffalo, New York - February 12, 2018 - In commemoration of today being the 9th anniversary of the tragic regional airline crash that took the lives of their loved ones, the 'Families of Continental Flight 3407' issued the following statement:

3,287 days. 9 years. No more smiles. No more laughs. No more hugs. Missed holidays, family gatherings, vacations, weddings, and graduations. Lots of pictures and memories. Visits to the cemetery. And plenty of tears.

The crash of Continental Flight 3407, operated by Colgan Air, on that snowy Thursday night outside of Buffalo 9 years ago today left a gaping hole in our families, our communities, our nation, and the world. And it never should have been allowed to happen.

But those same 9 years, those same 3,287 days, also represent the longest period in our nation's history without a fatal commercial crash. A tribute to our loved ones, and a testament to the dedication of so many in our group. We have shown that it is possible for a small group of concerned citizens to make a difference and effect change in the direction of our government and our nation.

We are so thankful for all those who have been at our side along the way to make this all possible. So many of our elected officials and their staffers in Washington. The dedicated employees of the Federal Aviation Administration, the Department of Transportation, and the National Transportation Safety Board. The professional pilots, flight attendants, mechanics, and airline officials. And the friendship and impassioned advocacy of Sully Sullenberger and Jeff Skiles, the ultimate example of the qualities that every cockpit crew should strive to achieve.

For the unspeakable pain that we all still feel, we also take great solace and reassurance that the deaths of our loved ones were not in vain. That our nation's regional airlines have been challenged and held accountable to raise their level of commitment to safety, thanks to new safety regulations in the areas of first officer qualifications, pilot fatigue, training, and airline safety management systems. These stricter requirements have addressed so many of the glaring safety gaps that allowed this needless tragedy to occur.

However, there is still work to be done. We are counting on FAA, DOT, and OMB to fully implement an electronic pilot records database and to finalize a rulemaking that will enhance Pilot Professional Development. When completed, these undertakings will allow us to make even further progress towards our goal of putting the best pilots in the cockpit, and setting them up for success.

The most haunting memory for us from this tragedy will always be what happened when the auto-pilot disengaged. With our loved ones in the back of the plane, split-second decisions needed to be made. The stick shaker. The stick pusher. The landing gear. Every pilot that we have ever talked to says a that situation like this brings you back to your earliest days of flying, to the fundamental stick-and-rudder flying skills that you develop as you learn to handle your plane and gain a feel for properly recognizing and recovering from a stall.

That is why we feel so strongly about the regional airlines and their lobbyists' continued efforts to water down the increased experience requirements that were unanimously mandated by Congress and put in place by FAA as part of its First Officer Qualifications rule. Of course, they must publicly say that they support the rule. How could you not? It has been a cornerstone of these safety advances that have led to the safest period in our nation's history. But understand that every time they refer to 'alternative pathways', that is really code for less experience. Less stick time. And even more reliance on technology. The exact formula that failed those on Flight 3407. Make no mistake about it, this backroom maneuvering for these 'alternative pathways' represents an attempt to weaken what we have fought so hard for, and what our loved ones paid the ultimate price for.

So to President Trump, Secretary Chao, Acting Administrator Elwell, and to every member of Congress, our message is simple. Occurring less than one month apart, US Airways Flight 1549 and Continental Connection Flight 3407 provide the starkest contrast of the best and worst of our airline industry. One will be forever remembered and memorialized by our nation, the other one will go down as a horrible tragedy that has already been forgotten by so many. But taken together they send an unmistakable message; that experience - and more, not less of it - does matter. So as you consider this pressure from the regional airlines and their lobbyists, we call on you to put the safety of the American flying public first and leave the rule in place as is. And on this day - February 12th, 2018 - we sadly offer you 3,287 reasons why that is the right thing to do.