

Southwest Incident Once Again Highlights Importance of More, Not Less Experience in the Cockpit

Buffalo, New York - May 3, 2018 - With the House of Representatives overwhelmingly passing an FAA Reauthorization Bill that had no amendments brought forth to water down regional airline first officer experience requirements, the 'Families of Continental Flight 3407' commended the lower chamber and challenged the Senate to follow suit. It also called for regional airlines and their lobbyists to put an end to their quest to undercut the new rule and instead focus on initiatives geared towards attracting America's youth to flying and making pilot training more attainable and affordable.

"We can't say enough about the leadership of our Western New York delegation - Congressmen Collins, Higgins, and Reed - in spearheading this critical effort to ensure that the 2010 safety law is not weakened in any way, shape, or form," stated Susan Bourque of East Aurora, New York, who lost her sister Beverly Eckert, a noted 9/11 widow and activist. "In the aftermath of Southwest Flight 1380, it would have been absolutely irresponsible to advance any amendments suggesting that regional airline first officers need less, not more, experience prior to getting into a regional airline cockpit. Once again we have seen the importance of the decision-making skills and handling of adverse conditions that are honed in these formative early years of flying, and that is what the flying public is counting on in the case of an in-air emergency. Now it is time for Senators Thune and Nelson to step up to the plate for a true 'One Level of Safety', and we know that Senators Schumer and Gillibrand will be there every step of the way to remind them that experience does matter."

The group also highlighted recent reports stating that universities with flight training program were seeing a substantial increase in applications, as well as a recent announcement about the creation of the American Airlines Cadet Academy. A key component of the Academy is its partnership with Discover Student Loans to make pilot training more attainable and affordable.

"Ever since this rule was enacted, we have seen the regionals and their lobbyists search for angle after angle to water down these stronger safety standards, all in the interests of their bottom line," stated Scott Maurer of Palmetto, Florida, who lost his thirty year old daughter Lorin. "The House's recent action on the FAA Bill makes it clear that there is strong bipartisan support for these heightened experience requirements, and it is time for these regionals to acknowledge this and shift their focus accordingly. Efforts to grow the pool of young, entry-level pilots should not be geared to lowering the bar so that regionals can hire more pilots with barely 600 hours of experience which was the case with our captain - that model failed Lorin miserably. Instead, we need to continue to focus on making the profession more attractive to

aspiring young pilots with outreach programs, creative training and flow-through agreements, and initiatives to make pilot training more affordable. When we do that, in conjunction with these higher experience requirements, we will be able to return to the old days of regionals being able to choose from a deep pool of pilots with a strong base of experience. That will allow us to attain the 'One Level of Safety' that every stakeholder should be working towards."