

Hearings to Shine Spotlight on Importance, Effectiveness of FAA Oversight

Buffalo, New York - May 14, 2019 - With aviation panels in both chambers scheduled to hold key hearings on Wednesday, the 'Families of Continental Flight 3407' announced that group members would be in attendance at both events. The Senate Commerce Committee will be holding a confirmation hearing for Stephen Dickson, President Trump's nominee to be FAA Administrator, while the House Aviation Subcommittee will be holding an oversight hearing on the status of the Boeing 737 Max. Besides a continuing focus on the full implementation of Public Law 111-216, the Airline Safety Act of 2010, the group is zeroing in on discussions of FAA oversight in the context of potential conflicts between industry interests and the safety of the flying public.

"We continue to push for the full implementation of the Airline Safety Act, and that includes jump-starting the critical pilot records database project as well as resisting efforts by the regional airlines and their lobbyists to water down the enhanced First Officer Qualifications (FOQ) requirements," stated Karen Eckert of Williamsville, New York, who lost her sister and prominent 9/11 activist Beverly Eckert. "We will be closely following Nominee Dickson's words in regards to both of these issues, although ultimately we all know that if confirmed, his actions will speak much louder than any answers that he provides on Wednesday. Both Secretary Chao and Acting Administrator Elwell are on the record stating that their agencies would not touch the FOQ rule unless directed to do so by Congress, and it is our hope that Nominee Dickson will publicly reiterate that position as well."

Despite the U.S. commercial aviation system currently being in the midst of an unparalleled era of safety, in large part due to the Airline Safety Act, the recent worldwide tragedies with the Boeing 737 Max have brought back to light issues with FAA oversight of both airlines and manufacturers.

"The lives of Lorin and all the others on Flight 3407 were needlessly lost because of the systematic failures of a regional airline in how it hired, trained, and resourced its pilots," declared Scott Maurer of Palmetto, Florida, who lost his thirty-year-old daughter Lorin in the crash. "The NTSB investigation made it painfully obvious that the FAA had dropped the ball with its oversight of Colgan Air and our nation's regional airlines at that time. The recent tragedies across the world have brought into question the FAA's interactions with Boeing and ripped open some of our scars from 10 years ago. Nominee Dickson has been on the other side of that relationship with the FAA for so long; it is hard not to imagine a stakeholder like Delta at times considering FAA oversight unnecessary, an inconvenience, or worse. Every passenger in this country is counting on him being able to put aside those past relationships and provide the leadership necessary to allow the FAA and its inspectors to make those hard

calls for safety; the ungrounding of the 737 Max will be a prime test of this challenge. Again, it is not the assurances made at a confirmation hearing that matter; it is the actions taken at the moment of truth.”

The Senate confirmation hearing will be held on Wednesday at 10 am, immediately following a Commerce Committee mark-up, in room G50 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building. The House Aviation hearing, entitled 'The Status of the Boeing 737 Max', will be held at 10 am in Room 2167 of the Rayburn House Office Building.