

Buffalo, New York- July 30, 2009 - The determined efforts of the 'Families of Continental Flight 3407' to bring about safety reforms in the commercial airline industry yielded significant success yesterday as the leadership of the House's Transportation and Infrastructure Committee announced legislation that called for sweeping changes.

"I can't say enough about the leadership of Congressmen Oberstar, Mica, Costello, and Petri, as well as numerous other members, in coming together to make this bill possible," stated Mike Loftus of Lubbock, Texas, who lost his daughter Maddy in the tragedy, and also testified at a subcommittee hearing back in June. "In doing this they are sending a strong message to both the airlines and the pilots that the number one stakeholder in the aviation industry is the passenger, which has not always seemed to be the case in recent years."

The bill, which passed out of the committee today, addresses a multitude of issues that contributed to this tragedy; a number of them associated with questionable practices at regional carrier Colgan Air, who operated the flight in partnership with Continental Airlines. Provisions in the bill call for improvements in the areas of pilot records access in the hiring process, numerous training-related areas, flight crew fatigue, oversight of regional carriers, and implementation of industry best practice safety management systems. It also includes language introduced by Senator Chuck Schumer (D-NY) in the Senate calling for easier identification of the regional carriers operating flights listed on internet ticket sites like Expedia and Orbitz, which will hopefully make parent carriers give greater scrutiny to the goings-on at their regional partners.

Perhaps most importantly, the bill significantly raises the minimum standards for flight crew on commercial airlines, calling for all pilots to have an Air Transport Pilot rating (which requires a minimum of 1,500 flight hours) to be eligible to sit in the cockpit of a commercial plane.

Loftus, a former commercial pilot with over twenty years of experience, strongly endorsed this enhanced requirement. "This is a long overdue change that will weed out many of the issues associated with inexperience and bring our pilot standards much more in line with what they are in Europe. It is so unfortunate that it took a tragedy like this to bring this about, but out of respect for the lives that were needlessly lost, I would hope that the industry would accept this as a positive step in making sure the same mistakes are not repeated."

The next challenge facing the group is continuing to push for the passage of the FAA Reauthorization Act in the Senate. The bill has passed out of the Commerce Committee and is awaiting additional language from the Senate's Finance Committee.