

# Administration Of Pain

By Capt. Duane Woerth, ALPA President



“Labor is prior to, and independent of, capital. Capital is only the fruit of labor, and could never have existed if labor had not first existed. Labor is the superior of capital, and deserves much the higher consideration.”

—Lincoln’s First Annual Message to Congress, Dec. 3, 1861

Most ALPA members know that this union has worked hard to cultivate solid relationships with key members of Congress from both parties. The ALPA members who together contributed more than \$1 million to ALPA-PAC last year certainly understand and endorse our approach.

Our philosophy of supporting pro-pilot candidates on both sides of the aisle and keeping lines of communication open to every member of Congress has made it possible for us to stay in the game in Washington, D.C., during one of the toughest political periods in the U.S. labor movement’s history. With one party in solid control of both the House of Representatives and the Senate, we have become an endangered species: a union that still matters on Capitol Hill.

A recent example of our relevance was the unanimous support I received from the members of the House Aviation Subcommittee when I testified to urge them to stop the Department of Transportation’s foreign control scheme dead in its tracks. CNN’s Lou Dobbs made that broad, bipartisan agreement a key element to his story on the issue.

Our bipartisan philosophy has also been essential in moving final pension reform legislation to a House-Senate conference committee. We still can’t be sure what the ultimate outcome will be, but getting even this far has been a minor miracle, albeit far too late for thousands of pilots whose pensions have been terminated.

So why, with such solid congressional support, do we still have to fight a foreign control scheme that would threaten our jobs? Why have we had such a bitter experience fighting for years to enact sensible reforms to pension rules that would protect our retirement futures? And why did the Air Transportation Stabilization Board hold back a whopping \$8.4 billion in loan guarantees, assistance that Congress appropriated to help our carriers after the attacks of 9/11?

The answer to these questions is easy. It is not the Republican party or its leaders in Congress. It is not the Democratic party or its leadership, either. It is not your union, its leaders, or its members. It was not an accident or a coincidence. It is the direct result of the unceasing opposition of



an administration that has shown no charity toward the airline industry and outright malice toward its workers.

The record is clear and unsurprising. From the early days of the administration, when it declared that it would allow “no airline strikes” on its watch, to the ATSB’s failure to deliver on Congress’ \$10 billion guarantee, to the mad rush to terminate pensions instead of considering

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smart reform, we have suffered one blow after another.

The administration has financed aviation security improvements—which defend our nation, not individual airliners—by taxing our companies to pay for them. It proposes to increase those taxes by a staggering \$1.3 billion. Its latest ploy is to open the door to foreign control of our airlines, just when we are nearing the turnaround that the administration’s policies delayed for years. On issue after issue, opportunity after opportunity, it has had one solution: stick it to the airline industry and its workers.

I will not dwell on this history, but I will not let it be rewritten or fabricated or glossed over by anyone, either. ALPA’s collective reaction to this assault would make our union’s founders proud. Despite the difficult circumstances and lack of support from the federal government, this union and our profession have taken their best shots and survived.

Battered, bruised, and scarred, we are still moving forward. I am confident that one day we will once again have a president in the White House who thinks as Lincoln, who was a Republican, did. We will have an ally who values labor over capital and who understands that the entire United States benefits from keeping high-paying jobs in this country, respecting our contributions to the economy, and safeguarding our role in national security.