

Leaders Make the Tough Calls

After serving as your president for six months,



I can assure you that the job is both the best and the toughest I've ever had.

I have enjoyed nothing more than getting out on the road to meet with line pilots at road shows and rallies. Everywhere I've been, you've looked me in the eye and told me what is on your mind. You are sick of greedy CEOs who reward themselves after you sacrificed billions to

save your airline. You are fed up with schedules and managers who push you to fly longer because of staffing decisions. You are tired of TSA screeners treating you like the threat.

I've said it before, and I'll repeat it now—we can take it back, but we can't take it back overnight, and we won't take it back by flying solo. Forcing those CEOs to pay up for your sacrifice is going to take time and unified efforts. Changing airport screening procedures is going to take political strength, and we have begun to make progress at the TSA, the FAA, and Congress. And we have a long slog ahead to tackle the ancient flight-time/duty-time rules and garner support in Congress on this most basic safety aspect of our work lives.

We are in the middle of negotiations at Alaska, Atlantic Southeast, Pinnacle, and US Airways. We are preparing for full negotiations at Mesa and Continental and are in push mode

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to find interim solutions at airlines whose contracts are not amendable for years.

I've made it clear to the news media, financial analysts, and airline CEOs that we are not going away. I've met with the head of the TSA to present our CrewPASS initiative [see "Committee Corner," page 37] with our union building the prototype and working on its adoption. And I have testified several times before Congress on our views on pilot fatigue, other safety issues, and pensions.

The hardest part of my job has been dealing with issues that pit pilot against pilot. Chief among these have been Age 60 and the aftermath of the merger of US Airways and America West. In both cases, however, we have taken it head-on, refusing to skirt the issues where large numbers of pilots hold diametrically opposed opinions. The Executive Board and the Executive Council have used their command authority within our union and not shied away from dealing

with the hard issues that affect individual careers and the future of our profession.

The Executive Board's week-long debate on the ALPA position on Age 60 is a superb example of the Board's fulfilling its heavy responsibility [see "A New Chapter in a Long History," page 20]. The MEC chairmen, who make up the Board, looked at the issue from all sides and chose a course of action. You may disagree with the outcome, but I want you to know that these pilot representatives worked together to find a way for ALPA to effectively deal with the reality of the situation to influence the eventual outcome and not cede the influence to other parties.

At US Airways, we are seeing the results of one of ALPA's most challenging mergers. ALPA merger policy requires me, the other national officers, the Executive Council, and ALPA staff to maintain "a neutral position on the merits" with respect to seniority integration. It also says, "The role of ALPA in seniority integration is solely to provide the process by which the affected pilot groups on ALPA airlines arrive at the merged seniority list for presentation to management, through their respective merger representatives, using arbitration if necessary. Responsibility for the merged seniority list falls upon the respective merger representatives..."

The two pilot groups made every decision along the way. They raised their own funds to pay for their own counsel. They gave direction to their merger committees regarding what positions to take in both the negotiations and mediation and ultimately the decision to send the issue to arbitration over the method of integrating the seniority lists. They consented to the fact that the decision would be, as ALPA policy states, "final and binding."

ALPA's Executive Council, at its May meeting, heard presentations from the two pilot groups regarding their opposing views on the award. The Council has decided to continue its deliberations at a June meeting.

Separate from the efforts of the Council, I am working with both MECs and the Joint Negotiations Committee to develop a strategy to support ongoing negotiations with their management. ALPA's goal is to make sure that their contract provides measurable improvement in the pay and benefits of all pilots flying for the new US Airways and establishes the pattern of recovery for all of our members. Takin' It Back means from management—not from each other.

Be sure to welcome our newest members to ALPA when you hear the call sign, Cappy, of the Capital Cargo pilots.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Prater". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.