

Get in the Game

As ALPA's president, I serve in various roles.



From testifying before Congress to attending the first AFL-CIO-sponsored presidential debate in Chicago, I am constantly being exposed to opportunities that motivate me to be at my best. But in the nine months since I started my term, I've never been more proud to lead this Association as I was at ALPA's Air Safety and Security Week.

During this year's event, ALPA presented "Our View" on issues facing the airline industry because pilots bring years of hands-on flying experience to the table like no other player. Throughout the week, we explored all sorts of challenges, from pilot training and shortage issues facing the industry's newest generation to finding proper funding for aviation security needs in an increasingly complacent United States.

We also explored what keeps ALPA prominent in the airline industry: its reputation and its people. I reminded all of this year's attendees that ALPA would not have the powerful influence it wields throughout the aviation arena and beyond without its cadre of pilot advocates. ALPA's reputation precedes it because of the rapport our members have built

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through their dedication to both safety and security within the aviation industry and to their chosen profession.

In 1931, ALPA's founding members made a total commitment to the safety of our industry. They organized pilots into ALPA, creating a unified voice to improve airline safety, end pilot-pushing, and make their chosen profession one worth following. Today, in an industry that's recovering from the age of bankruptcy, we find ourselves fighting for many of the same things.

During my career, my fellow pilots and I have fought against notorious airline management figures such as Frank Lorenzo, Carl Icahn, and Dick Ferris, because we wanted to take action during a time of economic uncertainty.

Unfortunately, I think that in these recent years we've lost some awareness of the power, trust, and credibility that we

possess. The changes in our industry over the last several years have forced many of us to feel less valued—like we are just doing a job. I call on that to change. It's time to turn our complaints into inspiration.

ALPA is losing pilot representatives at every level. From airport liaison representatives to Retirement and Insurance Committee members and others, our union is only as strong as our weakest link. As professional men and women, we have the duty to engage not only the next generation of pilots during a time of economic uncertainty, but also those who aren't even flying the line yet.

ALPA earned its stellar reputation because of our pilot representatives, but a greater challenge in the form of generational transformation is creating a constant turnover of pilots in the ranks. This turnover threatens the system as a whole, from safety and security issues to the very livelihood of the piloting profession, and our union.

Reflecting on this when I walked into that ballroom for the Air Safety and Security Week Banquet and award presentations, I was humbled. While I was extremely honored to be the one to lead the audience in celebrating 50-plus years of recognizing ALPA's pilot representatives, I knew that on that night, I was the one standing on the shoulders of giants—extraordinary ALPA pilots who propelled the industry's greatest achievements because of their time, energy, and determination to make airline flying the safest mode of transportation in history.

As pilots, we must continue to go above and beyond our job requirements to improve airline safety and security, to end pilot-pushing, and to restore our profession to one worth choosing. No one said it would be easy. But we can draw inspiration from the pilots who came before us, who shared their experiences with others to band together and tackle challenges with a unified voice.

ALPA has been the force in making airline flying the safest mode of transportation in history because of volunteers whose time, dedication, and determination landed us in this valuable position. I hope that as you read the recognition of those who have been honored (see "ALPA's Annual Air Safety & Security Awards," page 14), it will inspire you to take on more: to become a volunteer for your pilot group; to take a leadership position if you're already involved; or to engage others, at any level. The time to act is now. Get in the game!

In Unity,

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