

Decision Point 2008



"It has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all the others that have been tried."

—Winston Churchill

Anybody who has spent a single minute working in the ALPA structure understands the truth behind this quote.

Our democracy—as outlined in our union's Constitution and By-Laws—is the product of generations of pilots trying their best to "get it right." From the election of a status representative at our smallest local council to a full vote by the ALPA Board of Directors, our union members make every decision that affects how our Association operates.

Not all unions are run like ours. Some are very centralized; once the officers are elected, they make all the decisions. Not so within ALPA. Your elected reps settle issues at each level within our structure—from local council to MEC to Executive Council, Executive Board, and Board of Directors. And reps are accountable to their pilots at each level as well.

The duty of any voter is to gather all relevant information on the candidates' track records and positions on key issues and to cast a vote based on an individual evaluation of the candidates' ability to govern. All the talking heads, pollsters, and advertisements mean nothing on Election Day. All that matters once the voting starts are the results of millions of citizens casting their vote.

In my role as our union's president, I recently had to make just such a decision. Following the conclusion of the primaries, but before the party conventions, AFL-CIO President John Sweeney asked the affiliates to consider an endorsement from the AFL-CIO for Senator Barack Obama as president of the United States. As a vice-president of the AFL-CIO Executive Council and ALPA representative on the Executive Committee for the 32 unions in the Transportation Trades Department, I took his request very seriously.

I took three steps before deciding how to vote. First, I reviewed the position statements that Senator Obama provided ALPA in 2008 and that Senator McCain provided in 2000 (his campaign declined to fill out our 2008 questionnaire), which are reprinted in this issue of *Air Line Pilot*. Next, I re-examined the record of both candidates on issues that directly affect airline pilots, our industry, and working families. Finally, I contacted individual MEC chairmen and

listened to their views on the two candidates and how best to advance the interests of our members and profession. I assure you that the chairmen were quite candid in representing the various perspectives of their members.

Based on this process, I voted to have the AFL-CIO endorse Senator Obama for president. There are many reasons why I concluded that this is in the best interest of airline pilots, but one issue overshadows all others: the power of the president to appoint the leaders of the alphabet soup that dominates our profession—DOT, FAA, DOL, DHS, TSA, NTSB, and NMB. Based on the record, it is clear that Senator Obama will appoint officials who share his pro-worker, pro-pilot philosophy.

In the wake of the AFL-CIO's endorsement, vice-presidential nominee Senator Joe Biden addressed the ALPA Executive Board in September. His comments reinforced his and Senator Obama's support of pilots and workers, and opposition to those who seek to erode our profession. I am actively

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supporting Senators Obama and Biden, and I hope you will reach the same conclusion that I have. And one other thing—not one single dollar of your dues money will be spent on my effort to support the presidential campaign.

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One last note: Our profession and union are affected not only by who sits in the White House, but also by who serves in Congress. Our political action fund, ALPA-PAC, supports candidates for Congress from both parties based solely on their support for airline pilot issues. Our PAC is a key resource in our union's ability to speak for pilots in the halls of Congress, and the only way we can do this is with your voluntary financial support of the PAC.

In the end, our democracies—within ALPA and within our nation—require your personal commitment.