

One Set of Union Wings



By Capt. John Prater, ALPA President



When I opened this year's Leadership Training Conference,

I showed our newest union representatives a 25-year-old ALPA Christmas card. It was designed with all of the airline logos of the pilot groups ALPA represented in 1984, and I can tell you that none of them escaped major trials after Congress deregulated the airline industry. When I saw the card, I thought about how much has changed in our industry over the past few decades. But I also think it's a look into the crystal ball of what's happening with our airlines today. I told our leaders to get ready, because it's our duty to manage the changes that lie ahead.

ALPA fought to establish standards for the profession, and we're still fighting to make our members' careers more valuable. We're working with the National Mediation Board to move several of our pilot groups' stalled negotiations. These pilots are fighting for basic quality-of-life improvements like pay, scheduling, retirement, work rules, and job security. Their fight is our fight, and I urge you to support your brothers and sisters in this quest to better the profession. With more than half of our pilot groups in one stage of negotiations or another, your efforts to help other pilots will soon be returned.

We're also working with our governments' agencies to improve our pilots' lives flying the line. First, we're pushing both the FAA and Transport Canada to develop a new set of flight-time, duty-time regulations sooner rather than later. We've waited far too long to update these antiquated rules with hard data that reflect the science available today. We're also working with influential members of Congress to backstop the new rule in order to help the FAA finally get these safety improvements through the process without political or industry interference.

ALPA's ability to effect positive change within our government is closely tied to our roots within the AFL-CIO. This is because ALPA members understand that our futures are inextricably tied with working men and women who have joined unions in spite of hostile managers who will stop at nothing to destroy unions. This past month I met with cabinet members, congressional leaders of both the House and Senate, and the vice-president of the United States to discuss ALPA member issues. At President Obama's request, I received an invitation from the Secretary of Labor to consult with the labor ministers from the G-20 countries to discuss trade and job protection issues. ALPA receives these calls

because your union is involved with the larger labor movement. Do you know how valuable this is for our members? Do you understand that we are afforded these opportunities not because we are airline pilots but because we are ALPA members who care enough to help other workers and their unions?

With the backing of millions of working Americans, we're lobbying hard to protect the health-care benefits that we've rightly negotiated in our members' contracts over the years. We fought for these benefits for our members and their families to ensure that when we need to see a doctor or go to the hospital, we can. We made this choice at the bargaining table, and it is the right choice. With premium increases of

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more than 100 percent over the past decade, it's our job to protect our members and these benefits. With the AFL-CIO, we have millions of workers supporting us in this debate.

ALPA, through your solidarity and your selfless efforts, is leading the profession. But I cannot overstate the importance of our unity. We have more than 100 local councils and 38 master executive councils, but we all share one name: ALPA. We must break down barriers and not focus on the color of our uniforms or how many bars are on our epaulets or who flies for regional, major, or cargo airlines. We must find consensus and move forward as one, not only to protect our profession but to build a better tomorrow for the pilots who will follow in our footsteps.

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