

Keeping Our Strategic Priorities At the Forefront

April 10, 2011: My 100th day as ALPA president. A good opportunity to review where we are in fulfilling our strategic priorities and look ahead to see where we can effect positive change for our pilots, our profession, our airlines, and the air transportation industry.



I believe strongly in strategic planning because it allows us to focus on actions rather than reactions. I also believe that periodically assessing plan goals and follow-through is critical to successfully implementing and, if necessary, modifying a strategic plan. So, let's review my first 100 days in office.

When I took office, I vowed that ALPA would constructively engage with all stakeholders that can affect the interests, careers, and professional lives

of our pilots. Collective engagement gives us a unique forum to highlight how valuable airline pilots are to safely transporting passengers and cargo. This forum has not been "given" to us; we have earned it by establishing ALPA as the preeminent voice of airline pilots across North America, and we must use that voice to improve our pilots' quality of life and careers.

To that end, in the last 3½ months, several ALPA pilot groups have ratified contracts that benefit their pilots and their airlines. The Pinnacle, Mesaba, and Colgan pilots ratified a joint agreement that enhances their job security, while providing significant increases in pay and benefits. The FedEx Express pilots ratified a unique short-term contract with pay and benefits improvements that allows the pilots and management to continue discussions as they plan for the future.

As industry consolidation continues, ALPA has dedicated extensive resources and staff to our pilot groups involved in mergers. United and Continental pilots, Atlantic Southeast and ExpressJet pilots, and AirTran pilots are using these opportunities to ensure that the value they bring to their respective mergers does not become an afterthought to these corporate transactions.

On the regulatory front, we have made significant progress. The Transportation Security Administration recently approved a new crewmember screening system for pilots in uniform that will make airport checkpoint screening more efficient. The Known Crewmember Program, which ALPA and the Air Transport Association are jointly sponsoring, will begin testing at airports around the U.S. in the coming months. This program recognizes that we are on the front lines of aviation security and are not a threat to it.

On the legislative front, both the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate recently passed FAA reauthorization bills, which must now be reconciled. In recent weeks, ALPA initiated several Calls to Action that opposed several potential amendments to

both the House and Senate bills related to pending flight-time/duty-time and rest rules. We will continue to push for a final bill that recognizes science-based fatigue research, provides adequate resources for NextGen, and includes safety measures critical to all our members, regardless of the type of flying they do.

As we move through 2011 and beyond, our collective engagement will continue to help us to focus on the common issues facing both pilots and the industry: The fluctuating price of fuel. Escalating taxes. Groups that regulate, influence, or profit from airlines, often without regard for labor. The need for a level playing field for U.S. and Canadian airlines to be competitive internationally.

The price of jet fuel has increased at an alarming rate—more than doubling since March 2009. At current levels, fuel costs will be twice labor costs in 2011. In addition, taxes and fees now cost over three times more per ticket than pilot costs, with taxes and fees accounting for 9.9 percent of the

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final ticket price, while pilot salaries and benefits equate to 3.2 percent of average domestic ticket costs.

As the airline industry has become a truly global network, the rise of some foreign carriers, specifically in the Middle East, has made competition unbalanced. These carriers are de facto government owned, are based in countries where pilots have no representation, hire employees (including pilots) who receive significant U.S. government tax relief, and have financed many of their aircraft at favorable interest rates obtained through U.S. and European banks. In Canada, the United Arab Emirates has forcefully lobbied for greater access to Canadian destinations using Canadian military access to Emirates soil as a trade weapon. The Canadian government has refused to grant additional access to Canadian markets, a move that ALPA strongly supports. This is just one example of the critical need to think strategically about ways to ensure a level playing field.

In 100 days, we have made a significant start, and we must continue, through collective engagement, to keep our strategic priorities at the forefront.

Donald J. Moak

Capt. Lee Moak, ALPA President