

Stronger Moving Forward

The fundamental principle of this simple phrase is enormous. Not only does it capture the positive momentum of the many successes achieved by the Air Line Pilots Association, International, but it also acknowledges the struggles we have endured as a unified profession.

And as we approach another important Board of Directors meeting themed with that exact phrase—*Stronger Moving Forward*—it is an accurate description of our strengths and our challenges. It underscores the responsibility of this union's leaders to analyze, reassess, and prioritize the goals of your union, the Air Line Pilots Association, International.

Have our struggles and challenges paved the way for overall success? Some will question our definition of success. Do bankruptcies, weak contracts, obstinate management, and partial wins spell 100 percent success? Of course not—the losses continue to sting today, but they don't negate the successes we have seen in the recent past, and those we see today.

For the larger jet airlines, this is clearly the best bargaining environment we have seen since 9/11. The industry is making record profits, paying off debt, improving its balance sheets, and starting to show the stability of investment-grade companies (see "The Continued Evolution of the Airline Industry," page 25). Further helping our cause is the narrowing of contractual differences among the largest airlines. American/US Airways' rates will rise thanks to a pay-adjustment clause in the pilots' contract that enables them to piggyback the gains we made at Delta and United.

Does this mean pilots won't be looking for improvements in the next round of bargaining? Absolutely not. What it means is that we won't be negotiating in an environment that has a major competitor with drastically lower pay rates, thus hamstringing our strength, as we have had for the past decade. It also means that we are now in a much better position to pattern bargain off of each other's success in the next round.

For the pilots of many of our fee-for-departure carriers, the bargaining environment is very different, as the regional airline industry continues to undergo transformational changes. Some of these changes will be positive, resulting in more flow to mainline carriers, but others will result in painful decisions for our pilots and their families. ALPA remains committed to ensuring that our pilots have the resources necessary for success. As I said recently during a labor forum in Chicago, "We can't allow the labels of management—mainline, regional, cargo, supplemental—to divide us. If we are divided, we will fail. If we are united, we will prevail."

And while there are certainly overall generalities that apply to the negotiating environment in the different segments of our industry—regional, mainline, cargo, supplemental, and Canadian—we know that each negotiation or situation is obviously unique, and the necessity of tailoring our support

and resources to all of our pilot groups remains an ALPA priority.

In Canada, we are making progress in our effort to turn back the use of foreign workers to threaten our members' jobs. We have more work to do, but recent progress highlights the effectiveness of pilot advocacy in Ottawa and Washington, D.C. And we are developing a "Leveling the Playing Field" position paper specifically targeting issues affecting our Canadian members, such as adding labor protections to air transport agreements, including the Canada/EU agreement and all future agreements.

It's clear that external factors have an enormous effect on our industry and the momentum we are able to gain in the bargaining and legislative cycles. And it's also clear that your union is agile and able to adapt and maneuver through the uncontrollable forces that besiege us. Our struggles are real. And our raw fortitude to emerge and overcome our challenges speaks for itself.

Thirteen years ago, our industry—and the world—suffered from the atrocities of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. But we endured that horrific moment and its long-term emotional and industrial effects. And now, at the very least, we are reminded annually of how powerful a unified spirit is in the reawakening cycle. You'll find inside this magazine commemorative 9/11 stickers that I encourage you to display and share, serving as a constant reminder of the unspeakable acts that sought to destroy our spirit but triggered an entirely opposite reaction.

Yes, ALPA and its members are stronger today than we were yesterday, but it was a hard road traveled, and we still have a long way to go. To be successful in the future, we need to be in this together. I hope I can count on you to stand with me and your fellow pilots as we continue to grow stronger moving forward. 🇺🇸



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Capt. Lee Moak, ALPA President