



GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT
AIR LINE PILOTS ASSOCIATION, INTERNATIONAL

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October 13, 2009

Dear Representative:

On behalf of more than 53,000 airline pilots represented by the Air Line Pilots Association, International (ALPA), I urge you to support H.R. 3371, the Airline Safety and Pilot Training Improvement Act of 2009 when it comes to the House floor this week. This bill encompasses many of the concepts ALPA has advocated to improve the way the airline industry produces professional airline pilots.

The fallout from September 11 – consolidation, bankruptcies, changes in consumer travel habits, and economic uncertainty – has altered the business models of the mainline airlines. These business models now rely heavily on branded networks in which a greater level of flying is performed by regional partners. Code sharing and fee-for-departure agreements create a larger network, and when passengers purchase tickets from a mainline airline, it is very likely that one of their flights will be on a regional partner of that airline. These regional partners need to be held to the same high level of standards and practices as the mainline carriers – not just to the minimum levels established by FAA regulations.

This same industry turmoil has had a negative effect on the desirability of the airline pilot career. Career quality and uncertainty combined with a markedly changed pilot-hiring pool has created additional challenges for airline pilot hiring practices. In short, many pilots in the current pool of applicants lack the level of experience that generations of pilots ahead of them had when they came into the airlines. Pilot qualification requirements and regulator oversight of airline pilot training have not kept pace with these industry changes.

H.R. 3371 makes much needed changes to pilot screening practices and pilot training and qualification requirements. It also builds on industry best practices and mandates professional development programs at all airlines. Further, the bill directs the FAA to update flight and duty time rules to more adequately track scientific research. H.R. 3371 also includes provisions to facilitate the establishment of voluntary safety data reporting programs (such as Aviation Safety Action Program, ASAP, and Flight Operational Quality Assurance, FOQA) which we have long supported as these programs provide invaluable safety data which can be used to identify trends or issues in order to prevent accidents or incidents and increase safety best practices.

The best and most important safety feature on any airplane is a well-trained, highly motivated and professional pilot. H.R. 3371 will go a long way to ensure that there one level of safety across the industry. ALPA supports this legislation and urges you to vote “yes” when this bill is considered by the full House of Representatives this week.

Sincerely,

John H. Prater, President