

“If we do not sufficiently value the airline piloting profession and future pilots are less experienced and less skilled, it logically follows that we will see negative consequences to the flying public – and to our country.”

-Captain Chesley B. Sullenberger, III , *Congressional Testimony*, 2/24/09

TO OUR PASSENGERS

Thank you for inquiring about the impending pilot petition. We appreciate the opportunity to explain things from our perspective and how this will have a long term benefit for the traveling public. We are a group of airline pilots seeking to rectify the flaws in the applicable laws governing airline labor for the purposes of keeping the US air transportation system the healthiest and safest in the world.

By now, you have probably heard a great deal from the business media, industry public relations, and the government. We can't take the time to refute or clarify every story or talking point, but we can explain our perspective without having to filter it through secondary sources.

It is the opinion of the participating pilots, as well as many who have chosen not to participate, that the air transport industry is fundamentally broken, and without prompt attention, the air transport system in the United States will suffer a catastrophic breakdown in reliability, safety, and customer service.

Experience and Aptitude

The pilots that move you between your cities are the front line leaders in the air transport industry. It is true that other employees in both industry and government are indispensable to the efficient operation, but it ultimately comes down to two operators to make it work. The airplanes you use to travel do not get there by some unseen force. They are moved skillfully into the air and back to the ground by a labor skill set that takes decades to develop.

We are of the opinion that you should get what you expect when you purchase a ticket on a United States based airline, and among those expectations should be a qualified, experienced, rested, and well balanced crew in the cockpit. Just like everything else in life, the adage of “You get what you pay for” holds especially true in your pilot. The real value comes in the form of a pilot that has been flying twenty years before he is given authority to be the captain of your airplane. Over that twenty year period, the pilot is exposed to a myriad of off-script flying situations that build and hone his experience. Much of that experience came from the military where abnormal flying situations are commonplace, but as the military has drawn down the amount of pilots it has trained, and the amount of pilots seeking to leave military service to fly large passenger aircraft has dwindled due to military flying becoming more lucrative and stable, that kind of experience is going to be difficult to find.

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Hudson, Iowa and Maui Miracles: Years In The Making

In January 2009, a US Airways Airbus was successfully ditched in the Hudson River after it lost its engines after takeoff. The Captain, Chesley Sullenburger, a 53 year old pilot with over twenty years of commercial flying experience on top of a decade of flying in the United States Air Force tapped into his vast reservoir of experience and was able to thread the needle and put his stricken aircraft down without killing anyone. This happened on a winter day in the most crowded city in the United States. Remarkably, everyone walked away with nothing more than an amazing story to tell.

That wasn't by accident, and not everyone could have accomplished such a feat.

Every pilot has a bank of experience to draw upon to complete his tasks in a safe and efficient manner. Every time a pilot gets behind the controls, he makes deposits into his bank of experience of varying sizes according to the task at hand. The sum total of this experience is the account he has to draw from in the event of an emergency. On that January day in 2009, the crew of US Airways 1549 made an enormous withdrawal without overdrawing their account.

By contrast, one month later, the "experience check" from the crew of Continental Connection/Colgan Air was returned for insufficient funds. The overdraft fee amounted to 50 lives.

Captain Sullenberger was not the only one to save his aircraft and passengers against overwhelming odds. A generation earlier, another former United States Air Force pilot saved his disintegrating B-737 by landing at Kahului, Maui. The experience he drew from, as well as the assistance of his first officer, enabled Captain Robert Schornstheimer to land a Boeing 737 that had started to come apart in flight. The only fatality was a crewmember who was blown clear of the aircraft after the catastrophic failure of a very high-cycle 737. As soon as the 737 had lost its canopy and the basic shape of the aircraft had changed, the crew became instant test pilots, for which the captain's fighter pilot background had prepared him masterfully. There is no procedure for a catastrophic failure of the basic structure of the aircraft, and that scenario can't be taught in a flight school. It was the vast reservoir of experience, a well rested pilot, and the general high aptitude of that generation of pilots that saved those lives, and the solvency of the company.

Even when the aircraft is destroyed, piloting skill and experience can still save many lives, as was the case on United 232 on July 19, 1989. The DC-10, with 296 people on board crashed at Sioux City, Iowa during an attempted emergency landing with the loss of one of the three engines and all three hydraulic systems. Of the 296 on board, 185 lives were spared when the DC-10 was maneuvered to the runway in Sioux City without the aid of any of the mechanisms designed to control the direction of the

aircraft. Only by manipulating the remaining two engines were the cockpit crew, and a traveling DC-10 instructor pilot, able to put the airplane into a position where they would have the best chance of survival. Captain Alfred Haynes, a senior United captain along with First William Records, Dudley Dvorak, and Dennis Fitch were able to combine years of experience on top of Haynes' US Marine Corps training and Fitch's Air National Guard training to save the lives of 185 people. The NTSB concluded that such training is impractical due to the high number of factors involved, but did commend the crew by noting that "under the circumstances the UAL flightcrew performance was highly commendable and greatly exceeded reasonable expectations."

You Get What You Pay For

Contrast that with the Colgan Air crash in Buffalo, where Continental Airlines had outsourced that flying to the lowest bidder, who in turn hired pilots with no meaningful experience, and put a problematic pilot in command. Colgan Air and Continental Airlines hired those pilots for one reason and one reason only - they were the cheapest pilots that would agree to fill those seats. Your safety was never a factor, as your safety costs airline executives money.

More and more skilled pilots are retiring, going back to the military, or just resigning because the operation is deteriorating, the career is crumbling, and morale inches closer and closer to rock bottom.

This is an undoubtedly harsh synopsis of the situation, but it is nonetheless true. Looking past the truth to make everyone feel some egalitarian utility value to the operation is the stuff of disasters. More and more skilled pilots are retiring, going back to the military, or just resigning because the operation is deteriorating, the career is crumbling, and morale inches closer and closer to rock bottom.

Don't take our word for it. PBS "FRONTLINE" had an extraordinarily accurate report on the hazards of "Flying Cheap." We encourage you to take the time to view the program in its entirety. The report details how the safety for you and your family are outsourced to the lowest bidder and the Air Transport Association (the trade group for commercial air carriers in the US) finds the practice to be perfectly acceptable. FRONTLINE showed in remarkably stark terms how modern airlines have replaced much of what you used to take for granted, and have done so with the blessings of the government. This is the same government that is supposed to regulate the reliability and safety of the operation, but more often than not, just moves the standards to accommodate the wishes of the airline industry and the public's appetite for cheap tickets.

The ATA does not care about pilot fatigue, training, experience, nor soundness of judgment. The industry only cares about is lowering their costs and pressuring the unions to give up what little remains of their pilot contracts to "fly the FARs" (fly the maximum amount allowed by law). You can be assured that once the pilots abandon the remaining protections of their collective bargaining agreements, the ATA will lobby Congress with millions of dollars to change the limits upward to allow pilots to fly even more and with even less oversight from safety regulators.

Safety is expensive, but disregarding safety is even more expensive.

In the Spring of 2010, British Petroleum (BP) had a mishap on one of their Gulf of Mexico oil rigs which spewed oil over the entire northern part of the Gulf of Mexico and the beaches of the Southeastern US. It has come to light that cutting corners on safety by BP is at the root of this disaster. In an effort to save under one million dollars by disregarding safety and outsourcing maintenance of critical components to the cheapest Chinese contractor, BP now is responsible for tens of billions of dollars of damages to the Gulf Coast of the United States.

Safety costs money. It always has and it always will. BP rolled the dice and lost, and the various airline executives are still at the table rolling the dice on your safety and the viability of the US air transportation system.

They make millions for doing so and do so from the safety and comfort of the Executive Suite.

Followers Are Cheaper Than Leaders

Pilots of the previous generation were overwhelmingly ex-military (80%), largely debt-free, highly experienced, and were hired for their judgment. The pilots hired in the past decade at the major airlines in the US are largely civilian trained (60%), indebted due to their flight school costs, with a moderate amount of experience. The pilots hired in the past decade at the regional (Express/Connection/Eagle) airlines are almost exclusively civilian trained, indebted, and largely inexperienced. Today's pilots are hired for their compliance. Pilots saddled with \$100,000 to \$150,000 of flight school debt and making under \$25,000 per year are not going to question their managers, and the airlines know this. There is always another 23 year old kid with \$100,000 in debt waiting for his opportunity to build experience at the expense of your safety.

Today's pilots are routinely threatened with suspension or termination if they refuse an operational directive they believe is unsafe. The airlines hide behind tortured interpretations of FAA legalities as justification. When the last generation's pilots spoke, the question was settled. Today's pilots craft their decisions to square with the directives of MBAs and their phalanx of accountants and lawyers, as well as their own personal financial burdens.

Pilot Pushing: The Industry Norm

Captains refusing flight plans without the minimum crew compliment or where airplanes are operated at unsafe speeds in order to arrive under the federally mandated maximum of 8:00 hours (planned at 7:50 for a flight that historically arrives at 8:10) are told they will be disciplined if they don't accept the flight. Airlines are reluctant to staff airplanes with three pilots on flights of just over 8:00 hours as this costs them money. They would rather compel the captain to fly lower and faster, even though the practice is generally considered less safe and burns more fuel. Airline management finds spending money on extra fuel and maintenance somehow preferable to spending it on the FAA mandated third pilot. Even when your safety is cost neutral, airline executives choose pilot compliance over judgment.

Always remember that yesterday's pilots were hired for their judgment and today's pilots are hired for their compliance. Followers are cheaper than leaders. Your safety costs airline executives money.

When the FAA intervenes, the airlines casually dismiss them, pay reduced fines, and implement pilot staffing enhancements at their own leisure.

Pilots are routinely scrutinized and pressured to fly ill or fatigued to help minimize the staffing requirements, due to unilateral managerial edicts seeking to create disciplinary issues out of pilot health and judgment. It matters not if federal arbitrators repeatedly declare these disciplinary programs to be inappropriate or illegal, the airlines keep implementing them to save costs and control pilots.

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“Pilot pushing” is the process of airline management scheduling pilots beyond reasonable limits and against the judgment of the pilot, and it is an industry-wide practice. This is not a new phenomenon, as the precipitating cause for pilots to unionize in the 1930s was “pilot pushing.” After the government and pilot union (ALPA) rectified the problem in the 1930s and 1940s, there were relatively few problems in the decades that followed. This changed in the post-regulation era when financial alchemists like Frank Lorenzo calculated that extracting “productivity“ from pilot scheduling could give a competitive advantage in the newly deregulated marketplace and financial free-for-all of the 1980s. The practice continues to this day.

Not only does the practice continue within the confines of the airline industry, but the government actively pursues such pilot pushing under the various regulations designed to prevent such a practice. The most recent incarnation is the Orwellian proposal to mitigate fatigue by allowing the airlines to schedule the same flying to be done by far fewer pilots. The industry is certainly happy with the proposed regulations, as they will allow

more control over pilot schedules with legal eyewash woven throughout in order to deflect any blame for fatigue induced disasters.

Even more disturbing is the proposal for any regulation to be waived by the FAA if the airline can establish, to the satisfaction of the FAA (which is really to the satisfaction of the Air Transport Association), that enough classroom time has been accomplished to “educate” pilots in the consequences of fatigue. Somehow, your safety is supposed to be enhanced by subjecting pilots to two more hours of lectures on how fatigue is dangerous, and then scheduling them to fly even more. The hidden danger is how the relaxation of regulations on a case-by-case basis will create competitive niches within the marketplace and forcing other carriers to follow suit.

The most recent incarnation is the Orwellian proposal to mitigate fatigue by allowing the airlines to schedule the same flying to be done by far fewer pilots.

That’s another way of saying your safety will go to the lowest bidder. Scheduling up to contractual or regulatory limits is permissible, as limits are limits for a reason. As long as the pilots concerned are free to decline an assignment based upon their own FAA authority to self-assess their fitness for flight, we do not have a problem with aggressive scheduling. This is all predicated upon pilots being able to decide if they are fit for flight and the airlines respecting that decision.

Our petition would place financial incentives NOT to schedule pilots up to the FAA allowed maximum, but still permit the practice if both the airline and the pilots agreed it was prudent. The incentives would be for airlines to increase staffing and decrease the amount of flying done per pilot in order to enhance safety. Our petition makes rested pilots cheaper than fatigued pilots.

Your safety is never their concern, as your safety costs them money. They speak eloquently about safety right up to the moment it costs them money.

Almost all carriers view safety in this manner as pilot labor is to be outsourced to the lowest bidder. Southwest is a notable exceptions to this phenomenon as all its flying is done by pilots trained by the carrier, and they are able to deliver a safe product using, by far, the highest paid pilots in the industry. Without using outsourcing, Southwest is consistently the most profitable carrier with the highest customer service reviews. Contrast that phenomenon with the other carriers who use outsourcing and are trapped in a revolving door between bankruptcy and labor relations nightmares. Executive bonus programs seem not to reflect such dysfunction.

Is Your Airline A Flight School In Disguise?

The question of what pilots will be staffing the airlines in the next decade rarely gets asked. Most believe the regional airlines will be the primary source of the pilots in the future, and they are correct. The military won't have the volume of pilots to staff the airlines. Many of the pilots at the regional airlines are quite talented, well trained, and nothing in our remarks should be taken to disparage the entirety of civilian trained pilots. The fact remains that there is little uniformity and standardization of training across the industry as young pilots must pay for their training out of their own pockets, so expense is always a factor. Flight schools range from very comprehensive programs taught by career instructors with proven track records to those where the flight instructors are the recent graduates with a few months of flying experience. They train on very small, light and relatively primitive aircraft in very benign environments. The first meaningful experience these pilots get is flying you between Newark and Buffalo. These pilots can be a captain within one year, with another pilot with no experience in the right seat assisting them.

Our objection is how the airlines are using many of these "regional" airlines as defacto-flight schools, where you are paying to ride in the back of an airplane where experience and credentials are often in doubt or short supply. Most of the time you purchase a ticket from a "mainline" airline, you are not made aware of what kind of airplane you will be riding to your destination, nor the experience level of the pilots. You could buy a ticket from Continental Airlines, and end up on Colgan Air, and not take one flight on a Continental B-737.

The Trend Is Not Your Friend

The demographics of the airline industry show that a tremendous turnover will occur within the next decade, and experience will be difficult to come by. Experience, aptitude and judgment are the three most important factors in a well qualified pilot. One can be built, but the other two are innate. No amount of money or time will make a well qualified pilot out of someone best suited for less cognitive intensive work. Individuals with the mind necessary to be a pilot will have their skills called away to other industries, or kept in the military, as pay and lifestyle considerations move candidates with high aptitudes away from a career where they make less than a Somali immigrant driving a taxi cab, or half the salary of a public school teacher.

Captain Sullenberger testified in front of Congress regarding his experience as an airline pilot and spent the bulk of his time describing the present and future perils of the industry as pilot labor is outsourced to the lowest bidder. He didn't spend his time collecting accolades for his heroic efforts on that January day, but spent it outlining to Congress the precise threat to the commercial aviation industry.

“...it is important to underscore that the terms of our employment have changed dramatically from when I began my career, leading to an untenable financial situation for pilots and their families. When my company offered pilots who had been laid off the chance to return to work, 60% refused. Members, I attempt to speak accurately and plainly, so please do not think I exaggerate when I say that I do not know a single professional airline pilot who wants his or her children to follow in their footsteps.

I am worried that the airline piloting profession will not be able to continue to attract the best and the brightest. The current experience and skills of our country's professional airline pilots come from investments made years ago when we were able to attract the ambitious, talented people who now frequently seek lucrative professional careers. That past investment was an indispensable element in our commercial aviation infrastructure, vital to safe air travel and our

country's economy and security. If we do not sufficiently value the airline piloting profession and future pilots are less experienced and less skilled, it logically follows that we will see negative consequences to the flying public – and to our country.“

That is the centerpiece of what Captain Sullenberger gave to Congress in February 2009. He didn't seek personal recognition, but spent his one opportunity to speak to our government describing exactly what we are describing in these pages. He is accurate and his remarks are backed by us completely and without reservation.

Government Is The Problem

As it stands now, airlines will continue to compete on price and seek to exploit their labor agreements to find that advantage. The government will continue to do what it has always done, which is preventing pilots from withholding their labor to affect a better working environment, compensation packages and safety enhancements.

This is the area we seek to address. We seek to change the laws regarding pilot labor contract negotiations, and set a minimum standard for pilot labor to prevent the shadow flight schools that are operated by licensed air carriers without your knowledge or consent. Our purpose is to keep the industry staffed by the most capable individuals for your safety and the overall reliability of the air transport system. Americans have come to expect the best from their airlines and customer satisfaction surveys show that discontent to be growing. We seek to fix this problem along the labor component.

If airlines cannot use the government to manipulate the labor negotiation process, and gain competitive advantage by finding the cheapest pilots, they must compete on reputation, service and operational efficiencies. Managers need to become managers, rather than financial alchemists seeking to loot the companies for their own financial gain, and at the expense of the employees, shareholders and flying public. Nobody is served well by an industry teetering on the brink of collapse.

You deserve better. We know. We are in the airplanes with you.
Management is not. Government is not.

How Much Will It Cost?

The principal objection to our proposals will be how much it will cost. The industry will scare you with tales of higher prices for tickets and reduced service. It is true that tickets will have to come up in price as the industry loses money with the current pricing and labor paradigm. Even without minimum standards for pilot scheduling and compensation, ticket prices have to come up to bring airlines to profitability. That is one scenario, and the other is if airlines fail, reducing capacity, and prices rise to reflect the reduced capacity. Both scenarios do not address the pilot proficiency crisis that is looming over the industry.

We seek to change the laws regarding pilot labor contract negotiations, and set a minimum standard for pilot labor to prevent the shadow flight schools that are operated by licensed air carriers without your knowledge or consent.

However, if our proposals are implemented, the total portion of your ticket dedicated to such is not nearly as much as the airline public relations departments would have you believe. It will still be less than the taxes you pay for your ticket.

The current pilot labor paradigm cost is a very small portion of your ticket price. A fully loaded B-737 carries approximately 150 people and if we presume a typical two hour flight at a load factor of 80%, the typical crew will carry somewhere between 50,000 and 60,000 people over the course of a year. This allows for training, vacations, and a few trips missed due to being sick or fatigued. This works out to less than \$3 for the captain and \$2 for the first officer, or \$2.50 per hour for their entire compensation, taxes, and benefits.

If we look at a B-767 transcontinental flight, the costs are even lower, as mass transportation is a function of scale. A fully loaded B-767 carries about 250 people, and presuming the same as the B-737 crew on six hour flights, a B-767 crew will carry somewhere between 30,000 and 40,000 people over the course of a year. This works out to \$5 for the captain and \$3.50 for the first officer, or just under \$1.50 per hour.

This is what all the sound and fury you hear coming from the ATA and government is all about - the cost of a trip to the food court or magazine stand.

Even if we presume our petition will result in a doubling of pilot labor costs (it will not), and the airline gets no revenue from the cargo and mail in the cargo-hold (they are paid very well for air cargo and mail), the total component cost of the ticket price raise will be somewhere in the range of \$2 per hour, depending on the productivity of the aircraft you are riding. A transcontinental flight will cost you an additional \$10 to \$12, or the cost of a basic airport meal, or two magazines from the airport bookstore, or one day's parking at the airport garage. A domestic flight in or out of a mid-continental hub will cost you an additional \$5, or about the cost of a trip to McDonalds, one magazine, a shoe shine, or the tip you gave the cab driver.

This is what all the sound and fury you hear coming from the ATA and government is all about - the cost of a trip to the food court or magazine stand.

Keep this in mind the next time the ATA tells you that pilot salaries are threatening the economic recovery of the industry and nation as a whole. It is impossible to stem the money hemorrhage by cutting pilot labor. When airlines are losing \$20-\$30 per ticket, the pilots could work for free and the airlines would still lose money (but still have millions left over for executive retention bonuses). The problem is with managerial ineptness, subsidized aircraft manufacturing, excessive taxes, TSA fees and the bankruptcy laws.

Compensation Down. Taxes Up

You currently pay 7.5% tax on all tickets, plus \$3.40 for each segment, plus \$2.50 per boarding for TSA, plus \$4.50 for “passenger facility charges,” plus another \$15.10 if you fly international.

Ask yourself: is an experienced, well rested, well balanced, and competent pilot crew that literally has the lives of you and your family in their hands worth the cost of a five-hour old club sandwich from TGIF or a mere fraction of what the government grabs? We would like to think so.

These pilots created a profession that would operate this modern marvel of air travel in such a fashion that over a billion people can be transported at 83% of the speed of sound, in a pressurized metal tube in all forms of weather to any city in the world without losing a single life.

This outrage you are likely hearing from the ATA stems from the overall industry practices as founded by the early airline bosses that pushed pilots to fly in dangerous conditions with little regard for safety. The practices of pilot pushing were halted by the early efforts of pilots that stood up to government and industry to establish a career that would see the phenomenal rise of civil aviation through a World War, depression, and the technological flowering of the industry. These pilots created a profession that would operate this modern marvel of air travel in such a fashion that over a billion people can be transported at 83% of the speed of sound, in a pressurized metal tube in all forms of weather to any city in the world without losing a single life.

The Conquerors of the Skies Always Get Paid

Since the advent of Frank Lorenzo in the 1980s, the modern airline bosses have dutifully copied his methods with similar results. The story is always

the same: take control of healthy airlines, force employee pay cuts, push pilots beyond the limits allowed by law, outsource experience to the lowest bidder, use bankruptcy to gain leverage, and end up stripping out the assets of the airline, leaving only an indebted, burned-out hulk and walk away with millions. The traveling public sees lower ticket prices, but at the expense of “flying cheap” and the safety compromises that brings. The employees of the airlines Lorenzo destroyed were essentially being forced to purchase airlines for him at the direction of a bankruptcy judge. This is why Eastern Airlines pilots and mechanics struck Eastern Airlines in 1989. It was never about the money - it was about being forced to buy the airline for Lorenzo who would ultimately put them out of a job.

With the Eastern debacle fresh in their minds, United employees purchased their airline in the 1990s by giving up a significant amount of wages and benefits. They wanted to prevent the recent display by Eastern and Lorenzo, and by owning the airline, they could prevent just such an occurrence. Not long after the United employees fully purchased the airline, United management hired an oil executive to take the company to bankruptcy, strip the employees of all ownership rights, and emerge with management owning a significant portion of the company.

American Airlines’ executives used the same outsourcing tactics with American Eagle, Reno Air, and Midway Airlines. This did not escape the attention of American Airlines pilots who eventually voted to strike the airline in 1997 over the very issue. 15 minutes after the strike started, President Clinton intervened and broke the legal strike, handing the momentum in the negotiations to American Airlines management, allowing them to preserve the trend for them to outsource flying. This ultimately led to a “sick out” by American Airlines pilots, a judicial injunction, and more pilot pushing by the company.

In 2003, American Airlines threatened to file for bankruptcy reorganization unless the pilots (and other employees) agreed to draconian cuts in pay and scheduling protections. On the eve of the employee groups ratifying the imposed agreements, it was disclosed that Don Carty, CEO of American Airlines, had sheltered over \$40,000,000 in executive bonuses which would not be subject to bankruptcy review.

Even seemingly altruistic proclamations by today's executives need more scrutiny. Jeffery Smisek, the future CEO of the newly announced United-Continental, has made much of his declining of his base salary until the newly formed company turns a profit for an entire year. This is not new to him as he has similarly declined his salary, in whole or in part, for the past few years while an executive at Continental. The business media has fawned all over him for his high-minded and populist approach to the declining financial viability of the industry.

If we look closer at Continental's financial filings with the SEC, we see that Mr. Smisek was paid \$6.6 million in stock awards in years 2006-2008, along with \$5 million in non-equity incentives for 2007-2008.

We can only presume that the current fanfare over his waiver of his \$730,000 salary will likewise drown out the generous bonuses skimmed from shuffling around pieces of the air transport infrastructure of the United States.

Airline executives will always be motivated to outsource your safety if it saves them money. The track record is conclusive in this regard.

This fits the current industry trend as American Airlines executives annually award themselves tens of millions of dollars worth of "performance" bonuses for losing hundreds of millions of dollars per year, or how the Board of Directors at the newly emerged United Airlines were each given 10,000 shares of stock, along with CEO Glenn Tilton being granted over half a million shares.

Remember, these shares were owned by the employees prior to bankruptcy.

The other airlines to waltz through bankruptcy court have had similar stories. In every case, it is labor that is the cause of all the problems, rather than bad management. In every case, labor takes the brunt of the cost cutting axe, while management is rarely, if ever, asked to take its hit.

There are exceptions, and they are few and far between. Southwest certainly is running an airline for the benefit of its shareholders, passengers, and employees.

Fixing What Is Broken Without Re-Regulation

Our petition is not necessarily for pay, but using the only language that airline executives understand: money. Airline executives will always be motivated to outsource your safety if it saves them money. The track record is conclusive in this regard. Many airlines maintain their aircraft in Central America and China, where the FAA has little oversight and labor is cheap. Licensed mechanics have supervisory roles, where they oversee unskilled labor fixing the aircraft. Such a practice is prohibited inside the United States. As the FRONTLINE documentary “Flying Cheap” reported, they seek to do the same things with pilot labor. It is only a matter of time before the “regional” pilots are too expensive and cumbersome to handle and the ATA lobbies Congress to have foreign pilots flying point-to-point within the US under contract with the various airlines.

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If the airlines are prevented from saving money by outsourcing safety and experience, you directly benefit. This generation of financial alchemists will have to become like their forbearers and actually improve service to attract passengers. Our petition builds in cost-driven fatigue abatement policies by charging airlines more if they push pilots beyond the industry norm. They will still retain the flexibility to fly pilots more than normal in times of market necessity, but it will cost them dearly. The pressure will be to increase staffing to reduce pilot costs. This is the language airline executives understand.

We also seek to expand pilot authority to refuse “voluntary” overtime flying and flying while fatigued. Pilot self-assessment needs to be absolute, final and binding on all parties. The industry-wide practice of harassing pilots calling in sick or fatigued must be stopped at the regulatory level with pilots being given meaningful federal “whistleblower” protection in matters regarding pilot pushing.

Regardless of the outcome, the airline industry is going to change. You, the citizens of the United States, can determine how that change will take place. By supporting our petition, you will put a stop to a 30 year practice of gutting airlines for the benefit of a few financial elites, and will provide powerful incentives for healthy, well-rested, professional pilots to safely get you to your destinations. You will no longer be guinea-pigs in shadow flight schools masquerading as Part 121 or Part 135 air carriers. You will stop the “bait and switch” sales tactics used by “mainline” carriers seeking to outsource their flying to the lowest bidder. You will also have a vibrant, healthy air transport industry, just as your parents did in the 1960s and 1970s.

We have made up our minds as to the right course and we are asking that you do on this occasion what you do every single time you board an airplane - trust us.

The cost of supporting us is the cost of an airport meal, two magazines, or the tip you gave to your cab driver. Who knows? Perhaps if airline executives had to compete on service, you would have a meal on the airplane, decent reading material, and more cheerful employees.

The cost of not supporting us and opting for the status quo should also be considered. Your safety will continue to be outsourced to the lowest bidder as airlines shed experience for compliance. The industry will continue to wallow in dysfunction and uncertainty, and the future Sullenbergers and Schornstheimers of the world take their aptitudes to other industries, leaving only pliable, inexperienced, overburdened pilots to hold together an airline the managers would just as soon see bankrupted for their own benefit.

To Our Passengers

Please call and fax your elected representatives and inform them you wish to see the airline industry fixed and that you support “The Fairness To Experienced Pilots Act - Part 2.”

The choice is yours. We have made up our minds as to the right course and we are asking that you do on this occasion what you do every single time you board an airplane - trust us.

