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"Stronger Together"
As Prepared for Delivery

Thank you to the Aero Club of Washington for inviting me today. And thank you for that kind introduction, Darby. It's a pleasure to be here for the first time as ALPA president. And let me offer my congratulations to this year's Aero Club Foundation scholarship recipients. ALPA is proud to support this important program again this year.

As Darby mentioned, I'm an airline pilot and captain on the 767. So, making speeches in front of large crowds in Washington doesn't come naturally to me, but I'll give it a go.

It's truly a privilege to offer the perspective of the more than 74,000 airline pilots in the United States and Canada who I'm proud to represent. And it's exciting to lead ALPA at a time when aviation workers are proving that working together makes us stronger. When we work together, our airlines and our industry are stronger, too.

Workers across North America are embracing the power of unionism. In my experience, solidarity has never been higher among airline pilots. One example is how the members of the Air Canada Pilots Association overwhelmingly voted to merge with ALPA. With 91.6 percent of eligible Air Canada pilots participating, 84.2 percent voted in support of the merger. We're proud to welcome them to our ranks—and make the world's largest pilots union even stronger.

Last week's agreement that averted a pilot strike at WestJet Airlines is another testament to pilot unity. And it is recognition by yet another airline that the future of flight is dependent on acknowledging the tremendous contribution of its pilots. Unity is also strong among FedEx Express pilots. With over 97 percent of members participating, 99 percent of FedEx pilots authorized union leaders to call a strike if it's necessary.

No worker wants to engage in a job action, but doing so is our right under the law—and it's an essential tool to negotiate fair wages and working conditions with managements that continue to fail to respect our contribution to their safe flight operations.

After only five months on the job, I have been proud to walk the informational picket line with pilots at WestJet, FedEx, and United. At these events and in many other ways, airline pilots stand together as one. We stand together in support of safe skies. We stand together in support of a strong aviation industry and a qualified and experienced pilot workforce. And we stand together to help our companies succeed. When airline managements recognize pilots as long-term stakeholders and respect our contributions with contracts that reflect their success, they are better able to grow their operations, while attracting and retaining the finest aviators.

Labor and management are stronger when we work together. It's just that simple.

We've seen the results of this in strong contracts at Alaska, Calm Air, CommuteAir, Delta, Flair, Hawaiian, JetBlue, PAL Airlines, and Spirit, and tentative agreements at Amerijet and WestJet. At these companies, union pilots stood together and, with the backing of their international union, fought for—and achieved—the collective agreements they have earned.

As our industry continues its strong recovery—a recovery that aviation workers helped make possible—pilots have never been more committed to ensuring our airlines provide safe and reliable air transportation. This means maintaining the gold standard of aviation safety that ALPA pilots—and many others at this luncheon—have fought so hard to achieve in the United States.

There is no excuse for multiple attempts to weaken the safety standards that make flying the safest form of transportation. Promoting false claims about pilot supply as justification to roll back safety are also unacceptable. These efforts are dangerous, particularly when it comes to first officer qualification, experience, and training requirements.

I was honored and humbled to join the Flight 3407 Families in Clarence Center, New York, in February to mark the 14th anniversary of a crash in which 50 people died—and that also moved this nation to act. To act to make flying safer. To raise the bar on pilot training. To do all we can to prevent another Flight 3407 tragedy from ever happening again.

Thanks to the tireless advocacy of those who lost loved ones in that crash, and to bipartisan leadership in Congress, we as a nation strengthened pilot qualification and training requirements and we saved lives. In fact, since the law was changed, we've seen a 99.8 percent reduction in airline passenger fatalities.

And during that same period—after raising the training bar and saving lives—the United States produced 64,000 pilots, while airlines hired for approximately 40,000 pilot positions.

Let me repeat that, since it serves as the foundation of what we stand for—and will fight to protect—when it comes to the upcoming FAA reauthorization. Pilot production is up, the fatality rate is down, and our skies are the safest in the world. We did that working together. Everyone in this room, on a bipartisan basis, labor and management, did that together. That's because we're stronger together.

Unfortunately, rather than acknowledging this remarkable achievement—and admitting the system is working as intended—some are trying to increase profits by cutting safety. They want to turn back the clock. Go back in time to when we settled for less. Back to before the United States set the gold standard in aviation safety.

However, thanks to bipartisan leaders in Congress, like Rep. Brian Higgins and Rep. Nick Langworthy, who are represented here today, and aviation stalwarts in the House and Senate, we are fighting to retain the gold standard. To set the example for—and lead—the world in air transportation safety.

We're fighting for the one level of safety principle that Congress codified into law back in 2010. Lawmakers said all airline pilots should have the same high levels of training and experience, regardless of whether they're in the left seat or right seat. One level of safety for captains and first officers flying in Part 121 operations. It was arguably the single most impactful safety improvement in U.S. aviation history.

This is one of many reasons that ALPA is opposing SkyWest's application to stand up a subsidiary to shift from one set of safety regulations to another for certain routes that serve small and rural communities. At the same time, the airline is asking the government to subsidize its operations.

What makes SkyWest's scheme so outrageous is that it applied to the Department of Transportation committing to fly under one set of aviation safety regulations, but now the company wants permission to use less-rigorous regulations for some of its flights when it chooses. One set of rules on a Tuesday, a different and less-safe set on a Wednesday. That's not how the system is supposed to work.

I began my airline career flying for a regional airline. I believe all Americans deserve safe, reliable air service, including those in small and rural communities. And ALPA stands ready to work together in collaboration with our industry partners to improve the Essential Air Service program and incentivize flying to all parts of our great nation.

In another bid to put profit before safety, some are actually suggesting that pilots should be removed from the flight deck altogether. Let me repeat that: some special interests are actively working to not only reduce safety training, but also to remove pilots from the flight deck altogether. As a more than 25-year airline pilot, I can tell you that the safety of flight relies on having at least two pilots on the flight deck at all times. Anything less is a gamble with safety.

Recent events have proven this principle, including the FedEx pilots who NTSB Chair Jennifer Homendy told CNN "Saved . . . 128 people from a potential catastrophe," during a near-miss at Austin in February. She went on to say she was "very proud" of that crew, and I'm proud that one of those pilots is seated with me at our head table today. Please join me in giving First Officer Robert Bradeen a round of applause for helping to avert a disaster.

First Officer Bradeen can tell you firsthand that airline safety depends on having at least two highly qualified, appropriately trained, and well-rested pilots on the flight deck at all times.

In addition to our advocacy to maintain at least two pilots on every airliner flight deck in the United States, ALPA is working with the European Cockpit Association and the International Federation of Air Line Pilots' Associations on the "Safety Starts with Two" campaign.

While some call it eMCO or extended minimum crew operations to disguise what these operations really are, they are, in fact, single-pilot operations. Promoters suggest, for example, that when flying from the United States to Europe in the middle of the night, perhaps when passengers are either napping or watching a movie in the cabin, only a single pilot should work on the flight deck when the airliner is out over the Atlantic and at the farthest point from land. They purport to reconfigure the aircraft flight deck and equip it with a lavatory without doors, so one pilot is always on the flight deck. This is not an advancement in safety.

If reduced-crew operations such as eMCO take hold in one country, it threatens all of us, including U.S. passengers on international flights. For that reason, any effort to reduce crews on airliner flight decks anywhere in the world must be stopped.

Across the global industry, ALPA pilots are always working to enhance safety and security. Let me give you just a few examples:

I was invited by NTSB Chair Jennifer Homendy to participate in a roundtable discussion yesterday to review recent runway incursions and discuss possible solutions. Any solution starts with having at least two qualified, experienced, trained, and rested pilots on the flight deck at all times. Earlier this year, ALPA also participated in FAA's Call to Action Safety Summit to identify opportunities to strengthen the system. We issued an ALPA Safety Alert reminding airline pilots to continue to be vigilant.

As unruly passengers persist as a serious concern, ALPA is advocating for the Saracini Enhanced Aviation Safety Act of 2023 to require a retrofit of secondary flight deck barriers on existing Part 121 aircraft as well as the installation of primary flight deck doors for all-cargo operations. Many of you may not be aware that cargo operations have foreign nationals as large game handlers and who are equipped with tranquilizers to subdue these animals. At the same time, they have unimpeded access to the flightdeck. Hard to believe it's true, but it is.

As Congress works to reauthorize the FAA, ALPA pilots are making certain that aircraft rescue and firefighting resources are required to be available during all-cargo operations, and we will also be focused on ensuring the safety of new entrants in the national airspace. We are partnering with others to ensure the FAA and federal entities have the authority to take counter-drone measures to protect the security of our airspace and public infrastructure.

We'll also be looking to improve safeguards for voluntary safety reporting program data so that we continue to identify issues *before* accidents occur and about which only one individual may be aware. As has been discussed at this luncheon by other industry leaders this year, ALPA is also committed to improving NOTAMS to ensure a reliable, usable system that complies with international standards and provides airline pilots with the information they need.

These are just a few of the key safety improvements for which we'll be advocating in FAA reauthorization.

As passengers return to flying, the United States has more than enough airline pilots to meet demand. In fact, many airlines are hiring pilots, which means pilots are leaving less-attractive positions for more-promising careers at other employers.

However, just because we have more than enough pilots now doesn't mean we shouldn't do more to open the doors of opportunity to everyone who holds the passion, talent, and qualifications to become an airline pilot. In the upcoming FAA reauthorization, we believe Congress can build on the strength of America's aviation workforce, maintain safety, and break down the cost barriers for all those who aspire to fly.

ALPA is calling for the government to align the support it provides to the airline piloting profession with that of other highly skilled professions. Professions such as medicine and engineering can access federal loans, and so should airline pilots.

The government should also

- Provide student loans for appropriate flight training programs,
- Establish grants to build flight training and education degree programs at minority-serving institutions, including historically Black colleges and universities,
- Increase funding for the Workforce Development Grant Program, and
- Make the Women in Aviation Advisory Board a permanent body focused on increasing and supporting women in the profession.

To achieve these goals, we're supporting legislation such as the Flight Education Access Act. In addition, our union is augmenting our national policy work with our own outreach through scholarships, ALPA ACE Clubs, and professional development and mentoring programs at more than a dozen universities. ALPA also conducts grade school visits and aviation community outreach to inspire the next generation to consider becoming an airline pilot. Each year, ALPA pilots engage with thousands of students to spark their interest in the piloting profession by visiting elementary, middle, and high schools.

We believe the piloting profession can and should be accessible to everyone. Opening the doors of opportunity is something we all can agree on, and that's why ALPA is committed to ensuring pilots can fulfill their family responsibilities while pursuing their careers by advocating for the AIR PUMP Act.

In addition to advocating with Congress, my team at ALPA and I are working with a renewed focus on collaboration with industry and government. We've partnered to develop solutions for global issues affecting our U.S. industry, such as making our industry more sustainable, fulfilling our goals under CORSIA, and reducing aviation greenhouse gas emissions by partnering to develop sustainable aviation fuels. We are also working with the airlines in calling for due process when the Dutch government unilaterally proposed to cut slots at Amsterdam Schiphol and highlighting unfair competitive practices by Chinese airlines operating passenger flights to the United States.

Based on the same principles, ALPA supports the bipartisan Fair and Open Skies Act, which would promote a more fair and equal opportunity for U.S. airlines and workers in the global marketplace by ensuring that U.S. airline workers have due consideration in foreign airline licensing decisions. As the U.S. industry is the global leader in aviation safety, we should set a similar bar for the workers who ensure its safety.

While ALPA seeks a collaborative approach to every issue, we won't hesitate to stand up and speak out against policies that would compromise the safety of our airline system or the rights of our members. We continue to stand together with other labor organizations in opposing efforts to preempt state and municipal labor and related policy for airline workers so that airline pilots and their families could continue to receive benefits provided by state and local governments like other workers.

Airline pilots recognize the value of union representation—and of joining the world's largest pilot union. But it's not only airline pilots. Across the United States and Canada, those who would roll back our gold standard of safety and companies that refuse to acknowledge our contribution to our airlines are seeing with crystal-clear clarity that we're stronger together. Every person and stakeholder organization gathered here today is part of the solution for the U.S. airline industry to be stronger together. Together, we can keep flying as extraordinarily safe as it is now while cultivating a strong pilot pipeline for the future. As an industry, we are stronger together.