



AIR LINE PILOTS ASSOCIATION, INTERNATIONAL

1625 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE, NW □ WASHINGTON, DC 20036 □ 1-888-FLY-ALPA (1-888-359-2572)
FAX 202-797-4007

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Senator Robert C. Byrd
Chairman
Subcommittee on Homeland
Security Appropriations
135 Dirksen
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator George Voinovich
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Homeland
Security Appropriations
125 Hart
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Byrd and Ranking Member Voinovich:

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has recognized the Federal Flight Deck Officer (FFDO) program as a highly successful component of our nation's layered aviation security system. The program is extremely cost effective because it relies upon the services of volunteer professional airline pilots. However, the FFDO program is in dire and immediate need of increased funding in order to maintain its long term viability. To that end, we urge you to include a funding level of \$50 million for the FFDO program for FY 2011.

On March 25, 2009 TSA Acting Administrator Gale Rossides publicly declared support for the FFDO program, stating: "TSA is committed to the continued rigorous growth of the program. FFDOs are an integral part of our layered approach to transportation security." Unfortunately, the agency has failed to follow through on that commitment. While the program is currently composed of many thousands of federally deputized pilot volunteers, it is operating with the same funding as was appropriated when it began with only 44 FFDOs in April 2003. As a result, the cost of maintaining the existing FFDO force and the expense of accepting and training new FFDO candidates have reached critical capacity, such that in the fourth quarter of 2009, the Federal Air Marshal Service stopped accepting new candidates for training.

The FFDO budget must be significantly increased in order to maintain the program's long-term viability. Funding is sorely needed to continue the process of accepting and training new candidates, maintain the existing force, and support a properly sized and structured managerial system, which is currently lacking.

On a daily basis, FFDO volunteers provide armed coverage on a significant number of commercial flights at very little cost to the U.S. government. This program must be protected and supported as a vital layer of aviation security. The Air Line Pilots Association, International (ALPA) urges you to significantly increase the FFDO budget in FY 2011 to provide this critical program with the resources it needs to fulfill its security mandate.

Sincerely,

John Prater
President