

**Remarks by
Capt. Bill Couette, ALPA Vice President—Administration/Secretary
At the 43rd Regular Board of Directors Meeting
Monday, October 11, 2010**

Good morning. To stand in front of a room full of airline pilots, dedicated to their profession, is truly an honor. Let me echo the words of my fellow national officers and welcome you to ALPA's 43rd Board of Directors meeting. And for all of those veterans who've attended more than a couple of BODs, let me welcome you back to South Florida.

This year's theme of *One Goal, One Vision, One Union* is all about advancing our profession. As we gather for the next couple of days to plan for the road ahead, I would like to talk about the people who will help the goal of advancing our profession.

As ALPA's Vice President of Administration, I am responsible for membership ... and that means the 52,358 crewmembers at 38 airlines in the United States and Canada. As pilots, we apply ourselves every day — flying trips, attending training, enduring medicals, passing check rides, but most importantly, providing for our families.

But, as leaders of the Association, we do much more; we work together to ensure the stability of everyone's careers.

We negotiate with our companies for better pay and working conditions. Since the last time the Board got together, ALPA has negotiated contract improvements at Air Transat, Alaska, American Eagle, Atlantic Southeast, Capital Cargo, Hawaiian, Island Air, Jazz, Kelowna, Mesa, Spirit, and Wasaya.

ALPA pilots are starting to talk about positive pattern bargaining.

But, when the going gets tough, we're also prepared to fight. Just this summer, our brothers and sisters at Spirit Airlines conducted a five-day work stoppage and won a new contract with better pay and work rules.

During that strike, I was proud to spend the week picketing with the pilots and walking the line in Detroit. It was an honor to be among them, and to listen to their stories. I want to congratulate MEC Chairman Sean Creed, and all of the Spirit pilots, for a job well done. You've earned your Battle Stars.

Spirit proved the value of standing together. More and more of us are realizing that when one group negotiates improvements, the entire profession benefits.

We work together when companies merge. Look at Delta and Northwest — a perfect example of how two pilot groups can work together to craft a successful merger. And we needed that example, because more and more of our member carriers are beginning to enter into consolidation talks.

Some of them, like United and Continental, and Pinnacle, Mesaba, and Colgan have made significant progress. Others, including ASA and ExpressJet, are in the early stages of their partnerships. And some, like our colleagues at AirTran, have just begun their merger planning.

The Delta MEC, aided by a new, more flexible ALPA merger policy, has set the standard for a successful integration, and it's been inspiring to watch all these groups work together to determine what's best for **all** of their members, and not just their individual pilot groups. I am confident all our "new" groups will be stronger because of their leadership.

As an Eagle pilot, I am very familiar with the challenges of consolidating multiple airlines and the natural tendency to cling to former carrier cultures. I entered this profession as a Simmons pilot. Simmons is a carrier long woven into ALPA history. It was one of six carriers that blended together to form the current American Eagle.

Many of you in this room have similar stories. You may have entered the industry as a crewmember for Eastern, Air Midwest, North Central, Atlantic Coast, Flying Tigers or a host of other airlines. We are all proud of our airline roots. But I would remind all of our members that, although it's important to remember where we have come from, it's more important that we know where we are going.

Part of that planning is finding ways to grow. We're always reaching out, inviting other pilot groups to join us. Since our last Board of Directors meeting, ALPA has welcomed the pilots at AirTran, ATI, Colgan, and North American. And we're working closely with JetBlue and Allegiant Air, and other pilot groups who have expressed an interest in joining our ranks.

And ALPA pilots and staff have committed themselves to improving the lives of our members in a variety of other ways. For example, as chairman of the ALPA Information Technology Advisory Committee, I work closely with the members and staff who are enhancing our IT applications.

ALPA Membership has made tremendous improvements with member voting. We've introduced web applications that allow members to vote in Association elections anywhere they have Internet access. Many of our pilots are taking advantage of this.

Additionally, the ALPA website has evolved to become more user-friendly, and provides a wealth of information, including a convenient way for everyone to check their

membership status. We've branched out to social networking services like Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Flickr, and LinkedIn.

The Association offers RSS feeds, a quick way to get up-to-date union news, and ALPA's Membership and IT Departments continue to introduce new programs and applications to make it easier to be a council officer. This has been a high priority for me because I spent many years as a Chicago status rep. I know firsthand how important it is to have timely, accurate information to conduct council business.

And because the information we provide is only useful if someone reads it, we've made it easier for members to update their contact information. Thanks to this we have updated and verified more than 12,000 member records.

It's no secret we all have smart phones these days. To keep up with you, we're developing an iPhone application to provide information like MEC volunteer lists, dispute forms for filing grievances, and local and national ALPA news. Phase 2 of the app will include a video portal, a searchable contract, and we're hoping to include a special feature with Jumpseat information.

On the communications side, *Air Line Pilot* magazine has gone digital. And next month, we plan to introduce a speed tracking system that will make it easier for Grievance Committee members to manage their workloads.

So, why are we doing all of this? I believe it's crucial to give our representatives and members the electronic tools they need, in a form they can use, in a timely manner. This is a basic principle of good union business ... but it's so much more than that. The world is changing and we have to change with it.

But like an airplane, technology is only as good as the members operating it. So how do we make our *members* better to advance the profession and improve the pilot experience?

ALPA's 2008 Strategic Plan addressed that question by creating the Professional Development Group, or PDG, which is chaired by Alaska Capt. John Sluys. The PDG's mission is to provide consistent, specialized services to all of our member groups, and to build our partnerships with government agencies, the airline industry, and academic institutions.

The PDG serves as an umbrella organization, overseeing several targeted disciplines. The Education Committee, led by Capt. Dave Ryter of American Eagle, promotes and explains our profession to young men and women interested in becoming airline pilots. The information details every aspect of our profession, including the routine tasks and responsibilities of line pilots. The Committee also offers educational outreach using our "Cleared to Dream" site, printed materials, and involvement in aviation universities.

Earlier this year, ALPA signed a memorandum of understanding with Embry-Riddle to take this effort one step further. The Association is providing educational materials about the union's contributions to aviation. Also, ALPA created a collegiate aviation professional development club. The Education Committee hopes to extend this program to other schools and aviation programs. And maybe they'll even make it up to Minnesota, to my alma mater, St. Cloud State.

The Leadership Committee, under Captain Bill Dressler of ExpressJet, trains and prepares newly-elected pilot leaders for their service with our union. The committee primarily accomplishes that mission during the annual Leadership Training Conference, or as we like to call it, "ALPA Ground School." You've all been through it — or at least you should have — and it's another one of my pet projects, because I remember how difficult it can be to step into the role of a union leader for the first time.

I doubt if many of our airlines' flight managers or chief pilots get this kind of training when they first start working; actually, based on my experience with flight management I KNOW they haven't been trained like we have.

So as we train our new leaders, who trains our new hires?

That would be another part of the Professional Development Group, the Membership Committee, which is chaired by Air Wisconsin Capt. John Schumacher. This committee coordinates member services with other ALPA committees and departments, ensuring all of our members receive the proper attention they need from the correct union source.

The Membership Committee also manages a specialized program for veterans under the guidance of FedEx First Officer Wes Reed.

It also oversees the Furloughed Pilots Support Program, which we introduced to you two years ago. Coordinated by Delta First Officer Larry Deist, otherwise known as "Furlough Larry," the furlough program is a resource for employment assistance, job opportunities, and pilot job fairs. The furlough team is helping our 3,300 furlougees as they are being recalled back to the line.

These are just some of the pilot volunteers, as well as our dedicated professional staff, working at all levels of the Association who deserve to be recognized and personally thanked for their service.

The point I'm trying to make is that the people of ALPA are working together, using our strategic efforts as a flight plan, to make the profession better. Without these committed individuals our union would not be possible.

Without unions like ours, the pilot profession would be defenseless against attempts to weaken our scope, slash our pay and benefits, and cut corners when it comes to safety and security. Can you imagine how different the profession would be if private industry was allowed to do anything it wanted, free from interference from ALPA?

I can — and that's why I'm here.

I'm a firm believer in trade unionism, because I grew up with it. My parents were both union workers, and they taught me the importance of representation and having a voice. Also, Robin was a union member, first with the UAW and later with the AFA.

For the last 32 years, I've owned Harley Davidsons. I started riding Harleys before they were cool, but I buy them because they are union-made right here in the U.S.A., and Harley Davidson supports labor.

And what is labor, anyway?

It's an organization of people — people who share common goals and interests, who organize themselves because they recognize that they can accomplish more by working together.

That's us — that's who we are. Whether we fly airplanes or build motorcycles, we work to make our members' lives better, and to bring them closer together.

We all need to back away from *labeling our members*. By this I mean labeling our members as "major" airline pilots, "regional" airline pilots, or "cargo" airline pilots.

It's true that everyone in the airline industry uses these labels. But we should recognize that these labels only serve to divide us. They place us into subcategories that management takes advantage of to whipsaw us and turn us against one another.

We must strive to be the people who get more for everyone, regardless of our self-imposed labels. When a fee-for-departure crew pushes back in Pittsburgh for a flight to Miami, it could be considered a long flight. It certainly is much longer than some of my past flights, which included non-stops from Flint, Michigan to Chicago.

When I watch a wide-body crew use the full length of a 13,000 foot runway going to Beijing, I sometimes think "God Bless You." That's a long way to go, and a lot of time to discuss whose landing it will be.

A pilot is a pilot. What hurts one pilot hurts all pilots. That's the message that ALPA must continue to communicate.

The only label we should concern ourselves with is the one that brings us here today — The Air Line Pilots Association, International. Our uniforms may be different colors and we have different stripes, but we all wear the same type of union wings.

One Goal ... One Vision ... One Union — ALPA is the only label we need, and one I'm proud to wear. Thank you for joining us and helping to advance our profession.