



PRESIDENT'S DEPARTMENT
AIR LINE PILOTS ASSOCIATION, INTERNATIONAL
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THE WORLD'S LARGEST PILOTS UNION | WWW.ALPA.ORG

May 6, 2022

Mr. Nick Calio
President and CEO
Airlines for America
1275 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20004

Ms. Faye Malarkey Black
President and CEO
Regional Airline Association
1201 15th St. NW
Suite 430
Washington, DC 20005

Mr. George Novak
President
National Air Carrier Association
1735 N. Lynn St.
Suite 105
Arlington, VA 22209

Dear Nick, Faye, and George,

I'm writing to urge you to stop the spread of misinformation about the availability of airline pilots and assist your members in properly managing the multibillion-dollar federal aid package that American taxpayers provided the airlines to ensure they could safely and efficiently serve passengers as they returned to flying. As evidenced by the recent 65 percent spike in flight delays and cancellations, it is clear to all that the airlines have mismanaged this critical relief package, which was specifically designed to make certain that airlines were prepared to meet the increase in travel demand we are experiencing today.

With the \$63 billion in relief that U.S. airlines received, U.S. taxpayers gave your members an advantage that no other business sector received during the pandemic and responded to the sacrifice and advocacy of airline workers. As you well know, we worked together during the worst of the pandemic to ensure the aviation industry would survive and be positioned to meet the critical air transportation needs of our nation. ALPA is prepared to collaborate with anyone who comes to the table, in good faith, and work together to help our industry navigate this challenging period. However, we will not allow airline CEOs who seek to exploit this current moment to divert attention away from their mismanagement of the pandemic relief, while lobbying to weaken critical lifesaving pilot qualification and training requirements.

Right now, many airlines have more pilots, carry less net debt, and operate at greater domestic capacity levels than in 2019. Yet, airline representatives continue to attempt to hawk mistruths about pilot supply and advocate for regulation rollbacks that would compromise the safety of the flying public—the same taxpayers who gave the companies billions to weather the pandemic and emerge on the strong financial footing they enjoy today.

The attempt to divert the country's attention away from their profit-based business decisions to cancel flights and cut air service to rural and smaller communities is bad enough, but even worse, airline representatives are pushing to weaken requirements that ensure pilots are qualified and trained to keep passengers safe.

In February, this country marked the 13th anniversary of the tragic Colgan Air Flight 3407 accident, and our industry paused to remember the 50 people who lost their lives that day. As you know, this was the last in a series of accidents investigated by the National Transportation Safety Board that led Congress to pass legislation and the FAA to issue safety regulations to improve pilot qualification and experience requirements to help prevent such accidents from ever happening again.

In the two decades prior to the law's passage in 2010, more than 1,100 people died in FAR Part 121 accidents. In the 12 years since Congress put these requirements in place, we've seen a 99.8 percent reduction in fatalities. Despite this extraordinary aviation safety record, some of your member airlines are actively calling to weaken these requirements and roll back what is arguably the single most effective aviation safety law ever enacted in this country.

During the past weeks, it has become crystal clear to passengers and the industry alike that some airlines planned for the recovery better than others. Some anticipated what would be needed to meet customer demand, and they made the necessary decisions regarding equipment and worker training to be ready. Others bet against a strong U.S. recovery, and now those airline leaders are trying to distract their company's shareholders and customers from their poor performance and planning by claiming they can't find enough workers.

Any assertion about a lack of available pilots is simply not based in fact. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Federal Aviation Administration report that there are more than enough certified pilots to meet current demand. Over the past eight years, the United States has produced more than enough pilots to meet airline hiring demand and compensate for the pilots who—because we were all in this together—retired during the pandemic earlier than they had planned.

In fact, five out of seven of the largest U.S. airlines have more pilots now—sometimes many hundreds more—than they did before the pandemic began. This fact was most recently borne out by one U.S. airline CEO reporting to industry investors that his airline had thousands of qualified applicants on file and “an excess of pilots” in the near term. Why would investors hear one story while the flying public and policymakers in Washington hear another?

No one is more committed than ALPA to ensuring that the United States has an adequate supply of qualified, experienced, and trained airline pilots. Moreover, we stand ready to work with you and others in the industry to open the doors of opportunity and address the financial barriers for some to enter the piloting profession to build a strong pilot pipeline for the future.

I can assure you that ALPA will give no ground—and we will call out every instance of false rhetoric about pilot supply for what it is: an attempt to distract and deceive the flying public and members of Congress about the airlines' mismanagement of the government bailout provided to ensure our industry would not only survive the pandemic but be ready to thrive once the recovery we are seeing today took hold.

ALPA pilots bet on a strong U.S. recovery—and we are more than ready to safely transport passengers and cargo. It is my sincere hope that A4A, RAA, and NACA representatives will put an end to the false rhetoric and instead work constructively to address the challenges faced by our industry. By focusing on what really matters—the safety of our customers and the strong economic recovery of our country—our airlines can provide the safe and efficient air transportation our customers deserve and for which American taxpayers paid.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Joseph G. DePete". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'J'.

Capt. Joseph G. DePete
President