

Imposing Our Will

By Capt. Duane Woerth, ALPA President



Over the last few months, I have been traveling to local council meetings, family awareness rallies, and other events to hear directly from the line. I have been impressed with the spirit and honesty of these gatherings. Given a chance to speak directly with their president, pilots ask tough questions about the economy, fuel costs, and our union's plans. And they listen carefully—sometimes for hours—as I respond.

Despite the tough times our members have faced, and no matter where they stand on various issues, they have been gracious hosts. They have shown me how much they care for their union, their careers, and their profession.

No matter whether the pilots fly for a network, regional, or cargo carrier, one theme has thundered home: Pilots are fed up with managements who fail to live up to contracts they have signed. As a result, I hear a new tone out there—an aggressive will to challenge management and “shake” the contract enforcement tree to achieve real results—a tone reflected in the priorities contained in ALPA's Strategic Plan. Some recent examples:

At Ryan Air, the pilots and ALPA took management to arbitration for shutting pilots out of flying opportunities guaranteed in the contract. When pilots won the arbitration, Ryan management sued in federal district court to overturn the award, and ALPA won again. Once the writing on the wall was in permanent marker, Ryan management sat down to settle. The result: Ryan pilots received \$1,075,000.

The US Airways MEC has used the Bankruptcy Court process to object to US Airways' severance and retention program for management, which was developed in preparation for the proposed US Airways/America West merger. The judge modified the severance program for top executives, in large part because of its high-dollar value, which the judge found in conflict with the concept of shared sacrifice.

Meanwhile, at FedEx Express, a number of pilots who were in non-operational status pending accident investigations were denied carryover pay and benefits that they had been receiving pursuant to the contract—based on the company's judgment that this was a “windfall.” ALPA filed a grievance and an arbitrator ruled in our favor, stating that the contract language and intent did not allow the company's arbitrary actions.

At Trans States, ALPA has launched a campaign to expose management's attempt to steer flying away from our



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pilots. This is just the latest example of a corporation's manipulation of a holding company and of our willingness to fight to ensure scope protections for our members. Our efforts can—and will—only succeed with the continuing energy and courage of our Trans States pilot group.

The recent shining example of challenging management—that of Northwest and Champion pilots working together to defeat outsourced flying—is described in detail in “Strength in Unity,” page 34.

ALPA will leverage its full range of tools in our strategic efforts to influence your airlines. In contract enforce-

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ment, ALPA isn't limited to simply filing grievances and waiting three years for a hearing—if the pilot group is willing to think creatively and get active on their own behalf.

The combined resources of our Legal, Representation, Government Affairs, and Communications Departments are the tip of the spear, backed up by the rest of our staff and advisors. We can do no less as we work tenaciously through these challenging times.

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We cannot control fuel costs, the global economy, or Wall Street. What we can control is how we confront those who would exploit pilots. From the first officer who files a grievance when management illegally reassigns him to fly a trip to a captain who is forced to fly on her days off to an ALPA-led effort to conduct a corporate campaign, our will can have a deep and positive effect on your lives and careers.