



# What Have You Done For You Lately?

Capt. Paul Rice, ALPA Vice-President-Administration/Secretary



The other day an ALPA member called me and unloaded a list of complaints—about upcoming Association elections, about the nasty politics at his MEC, about

his perception of ALPA's lack of participation in issues important to him.

As we talked, I found out that he didn't realize some basic facts, for example, that ALPA's national officers had been reelected three years ago. He thought it was only one year ago. He had not logged onto Crewroom.alpa.org for more than a year. He did not know that ALPA had been working relentlessly on pension legislation for three years. He was not aware of the Age 60 or fatigue surveys.

His call is not unlike others I receive, but this one clarified my belief that the single act of paying dues does not make you a good union member. You have a duty to be an informed activist for your profession. You should read everything you can get your hands on about the airline industry, your company, and your union.

The ALPA Code of Ethics hangs in my office, and it regularly reminds me of the responsibilities associated with our proud profession. Although the words written by our founding fathers are usually associated with knowledge of the aircraft or regulations, they also describe one's responsibilities as a member of ALPA.

"[An airline pilot] will conduct his affairs with ALPA and its members in accordance with the rules laid down in the Constitution and By-Laws of ALPA and with the policies and interpretations promulgated therefrom. Whenever possible, he will attend all meetings of ALPA open to him and will take an active part in its activities and in meetings of other

groups calculated to improve aviation safety and the standing of the airline piloting profession.

"He will continue to keep abreast of aviation developments so that his skill and judgment, which heavily depend on such knowledge, may be of the highest order.

"He will regard himself as a debtor to his profession and ALPA, and will

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dedicate himself to their advancement. He will cooperate in the upholding of the profession by exchanging information and experience with his fellow pilots and by actively contributing to the work of professional groups and the technical press."

You cannot complain about what ALPA is *not* doing for you, until and unless you understand what ALPA is doing for you. Every ALPA pilot should discuss important issues with his or her fellow pilots. Find out what your MEC and Local Council representatives are working on. Read the Industry News Feed on Crewroom.alpa.org to find out what's going on in the airline industry. Read your *Air Line Pilot*, *FastReads*, and other news from ALPA. After you have educated yourself, you can argue passionately as an informed union member. Once you are informed, you are ready to become one of the ALPA members who make changes happen.

Apathy leads to ignorance and powerlessness. Votes to elect representatives and decide major membership issues, in many cases, are not made up of the majority of eligible voters. *Voter apathy is giving the minority of pilots control over your union.*

Age 60 is a huge issue for airline pilots—at least that's what I thought. By unanimous direction of the Executive Board, an education campaign was conducted, and in July 2005, a survey was conducted to find out what ALPA pilots thought about mandatory retirement at age 60. Only 38 percent of eligible pilots took the survey. As I write this, we are running

(Dec. 1, 2005 to Jan. 7, 2006) a survey on pilot fatigue—because we have repeatedly heard that fatigue is an issue important to pilots.

ALPA is you. ALPA leaders at the local, national, and international levels need to know your opinion on important issues. Today's pilots have an enormous amount of information available to them, on line, in newsletters, on hotline recordings, in e-mail *FastReads* from ALPA International, and from MECs and LECs. We have made following the airline industry news on Crewroom.alpa.org easy for you.

If you want a strong union and a strong profession, you have to participate. You can't expect someone else to take the survey, or attend the meetings, or walk the picket line. Your participation in the democratic process is vital to the strength and unity of ALPA. You have a responsibility as an ALPA pilot to be informed and to ensure that your opinion is included when the votes are counted.

ALPA has become the strongest pilot union in the world because its members make it that way. Let's keep it that way. Get involved. Stay strong. Stay focused. Stay safe. 