



JOHN PERKINSON

ALPA PILOTS RALLY ON THE MALL

By John Perkinson
Staff Writer

ALPA pilots, family members, and staff joined thousands of transportation workers May 17 for the 2007 Transportation Day of Action before the U.S. Capitol to declare “Enough Is Enough” to Washington politicians who’ve turned a deaf ear to their transportation worker constituents and allowed airline managements to manipulate union, pension, and bankruptcy laws.

On the morning of the event, ALPA pilots rallied on the National Mall, near the Capitol building. ALPA’s president, Capt. John Prater, other ALPA national officers—including Capts. Paul Rice, Bill Couette, and Chris Beebe—and many of the union’s MEC chairmen stood in front of a giant inflated rat that was grasping bags of money and berated the White House and Congress for ignoring the American worker and deferring to the interests of big business.

“We’ve watched as airline managements, during the last six years, have slashed employee wages and benefits,” said Prater. “Now, management has the gall to line its pockets with those same cost savings. It’s an injustice, and we’re not going to tolerate it.”

“I’ve been ALPA’s president now for four-and-a-half months, and everywhere I’ve gone to speak with our members, I’ve met airline pilots who are ready, willing, and determined to restore our profession.”

ALPA’s first vice-president, Capt. Paul Rice, declared, “It is time to negotiate for your profession, for your brothers and sisters in other uniforms, with different color stripes, with a different emblem on their hats, because in your pocket you carry the same certificate, you have the same education, you have the same values, and more importantly, you have the same heart.”

Prater officially introduced Capt.



JOHN PERKINSON



JOCELYN AUGUSTINO

Mike Donatelli (Delta), chairman of ALPA's Strategic Preparedness and Strike Committee (SPSC), which serves to support the strategic goals of ALPA's MECs by helping them build their internal organizational structures to promote and leverage pilot unity (see "SPSC: Support for ALPA's Aggressive Bargaining Agenda," page 30).

"Pilot groups facing contract negotiations and other critical challenges have a new resource," said Donatelli. "The SPSC will ensure that ALPA MECs are properly prepared as we 'take it back.'"

The SPSC spearheaded much of ALPA's successful rally, getting a quarter of the Association's MEC chairmen to speak to the crowd.

After the spirited ALPA event, the rallyers proceeded farther down the National Mall, where members of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, the Association of Flight Attendants, and dozens of other transportation unions were expressing their collective outrage at excessive management compensation packages, the state of transportation jobs, termination of pensions, and the general treatment of labor in the United States.

Many of the presentations centered on the proposed Employee Free Choice Act, which would provide employees who work under the National Labor Relations Board easier access to union representation, and on the search for a U.S. president who will work with, rather than against, the labor movement.

OPPOSITE: ALPA pilots make sure their message is heard during the 2007 Transportation Day of Action on May 17. ABOVE: ALPA pilots, family members, and staff march on the National Mall to join thousands of other transportation workers at the afternoon rally. RIGHT: Capt. Mike Donatelli (Delta), newly elected chairman of ALPA's Strategic Preparedness and Strike Committee (SPSC), addresses the crowd.

The IAM invited *all* declared presidential candidates to speak. Three Democratic candidates—Sen. Joseph Biden (Del.), Rep. Dennis Kucinich (Ohio), and Sen. Hillary Clinton (N.Y.)—accepted. National labor representatives, including Prater, and other pro-labor national lawmakers also spoke.

In an address to the larger gathering, Prater said, "In the coming years, ALPA pilots are going to be leaders in the drive to turn this country around for working America. We will bring our reputation, our credibility, and our strength to bear with Congress and the White House. We will spare no efforts to force them to recognize that workers are the backbone of our economy and of our society."

Transportation workers came from as far away as Hawaii and Alaska to participate in this event, which garnered significant news media coverage.

To view footage of the event, please visit Crewroom.alpa.org and click on the "Video" tab. 📺