

Every Pilot Has a Dog In This Fight

Every generation of ALPA pilots has faced its own fight to secure the future of the



entire airline piloting profession. The Key Men, led by Dave Behncke, faced a struggle over the very existence of a union for pilots. Later generations confronted a second world war, the introduction of jets, the fight over crew complement, hijackings, deregulation, and the tragic events of 9/11 and bankruptcy.

Well, we now have our own fateful moment. The representation election for US Airways pilots is another stark moment in ALPA history. The decision that these pilots will soon make will have broad and lasting implications for every airline pilot in the United States and Canada—and beyond.

Why does this vote matter so much? The 5,000-plus pilots of the combined US Airways are important to ALPA, of course. But far more than mere numbers, their decision will determine how quickly we can succeed in our efforts to restore our profession at all the airlines whose pilots ALPA represents. The truth remains that US Airways pilots deserve serious pay raises and improved working conditions—now. The sooner we can get back to negotiations, the better.

While in my heart I believe we can best handle the issues of seniority integration within our union, the fact is that our brothers and sisters may choose another path—an indepen-

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dent union. Unfortunately, that path will lead only to years of lawsuits, infighting, and stalled contract talks while still likely not resolving the seniority issues. In that case, no one wins. The Continental pilots and I have traveled that path of isolation and know firsthand how hard it is.

As I write this column, ALPA leaders and staff are preparing for the last few weeks of our intensive information campaign to convince our US Airways members to stay in our union. The ALPA MEC leaders from East and West are gearing up for crewroom visits, open debates, and face-to-face



dialogue. They are in this fight to win, and I have been impressed by their devotion to the cause, fighting for their pilots and continued ALPA representation.

But beyond these representatives, I believe that every ALPA pilot can play an important role in winning this election, no matter what airline you fly for. First, you can reach out to those US Airways pilots you know—through military service, ALPA volunteer work, or former airline employment—and talk to them about their futures and your support for their fight to secure their future.

If you don't know anyone who flies for US Airways, you can simply keep your eyes and ears open and talk to those pilots you meet in the jumpseat, in terminals, or while doing ALPA work. Tell them your story. Let them know what ALPA means to our profession and to you and your family. Let them know how much you care and what you are willing to do to support them within our union.

Of course, our union is not perfect. No organization is. But after 76 years of service, our union still offers the best hope of advancing the goals of all airline pilots. Our union still represents the best path to influence management, government, and the flying public to support our agenda. And our union is the one entity that can reflect the will of our profession on all fronts.

Every pilot in our union has a dog in this fight. Do your part. Take a stand. Make sure that on April 17, when the election results are released, you can look yourself in the mirror and say, "I did my part to defend my union, my profession, and the future of my ALPA brothers and sisters."

Fly safe.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John Prater". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.