



# ‘YOU ARE ALPA’

## New ALPA LEC Officers Learn the Ropes at Leadership Conference 2008

**T**he recurring message posed to newly elected local council officers attending this year’s ALPA Leadership Conference was, “You are ALPA.” The late-February event emphasized that ALPA relies on its 61,000-plus members, through their elected representatives, for direction and guidance—and not the other way around.

This year’s Conference illustrated to the 73 new pilot leaders—54 of whom make up more than 20 percent of the Association’s Board of Directors—their responsibilities and many of the services and resources available through the union. The seminar also presented many of today’s airline industry issues for these new union reps to contemplate as they prepare to take office.

“You are now sitting in the left seat of ALPA,” said the Association’s president, Capt. John Prater, welcoming the Conference attendees. “Only pilots lead this union.”

Prater talked about the importance of strong leadership and fulfilling the duties that come with serving as a local council representative. He discussed the various challenges confronting the piloting profession and the need for solidarity, within the Association and with other unions and organizations that support ALPA’s positions and goals.

### From soup to nuts

Much of the Conference was spent familiarizing ALPA’s new council officers

By John Perkinson, Staff Writer

with the tools available to them—the nearly 400 Association employees, offices throughout Canada and the United States, contracted services such as the ALPA Aeromedical Office and additional legal support from the Cohen, Weiss, and Simon law firm, and many other resources.

Bruce York, director of ALPA’s Representation Department, outlined what ALPA pilots need to do to return to positive-pattern collective bargaining.

Don Skiados, director of ALPA’s Communications Department, explained the elements of the comprehensive and coordinated communications package required to support a successful campaign.

Representatives from the Association’s national committees explained that no ALPA pilot group has to “reinvent the wheel.” Experienced pilots are available to provide templates and other materials and recommendations for contract negotiations, strike preparedness, pilot assistance, jumpseat access, pursuit of reasonable flight time/duty time rules, and other activities.

Capt. Brad Mahoney (FedEx), chairman of his MEC Communications Committee and member of ALPA’s Strategic Preparedness and Strike Committee, asked Conference attendees, “Are you going to have a crowd, a mob, or an organization?” He stressed the importance of preparing the entire pilot group for contract negotiations and other critical campaigns. “Unity starts

at the MEC,” Mahoney added.

Leadership Conference attendees watched role-play exercises about group dynamics and consensus building. ALPA attorneys divided Conference participants into four groups and conducted grievance training exercises. Keith Hagy, director of ALPA’s Engineering and Air Safety Department, and managing attorney Jim Johnson talked about the ALPA Orange Card and the great number of resources that members can access when involved in or witnessing an accident or incident.

However, the introduction to resources didn’t stop there. Similar presentations covered the duty of fair representation, use of the web and ALPA’s mass e-mail distribution system, producing videos, desktop publishing support, distributing newsletters, specialized training, IT and other technical services, ordering equipment, legal support, leasing office space, budgeting finances, and conducting meetings—everything an ALPA local council representative could need to meet today’s (and tomorrow’s) challenges.

### Capital is global, labor is local

The 3½-day program, held at both ALPA’s Herndon, Va., Conference Center and a nearby hotel ballroom, included many timely and thought-provoking presentations.

“We’re starting to see the effects of deregulation in other parts of the world,” said Capt. Paul Rice, ALPA’s first vice-president and IFALPA deputy presi-

dent, who reported on the growing international pressures on the piloting profession. Rice examined the international airline alliances and their inherent potential to contain pilot compensation, noting that some alliances are planning to acquire aircraft and may place them at alliance-member airlines that offer the lowest operating costs.

Rice also briefed attendees on the status of the new British Airways (BA) alter-ego airline, OpenSkies, which has plans to operate from Belgium using non-BA pilots. "This is not just their fight; it's also ours," he noted.

"No independence is left in the world," Rice said, talking about the importance of IFALPA as a mechanism for coordinating international pilot labor efforts. "We must look beyond our borders to meet the challenges of the emerging global airline industry. The world's pilots are beginning to realize this and are starting to come together."

"The liberalization of markets, increased competition, and the desire to maximize profits and achieve cost effi-



**AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka told Conference attendees that the economy needs to meet the needs of the majority and not just the chosen few.**

ciencies are driving the consolidation train," noted Seth Rosen, director of the International Pilot Services Corporation and former director of ALPA's Representation Department. He and Ana McAhron-Schulz, director of ALPA's Economic &

Financial Analysis Department, talked about consolidation throughout the airline industry as well as the risks and different scenarios that could play out.

"Labor is the key element," Rosen emphasized. "Without labor as a

## New Does Not Mean Unseasoned

This year's Leadership Conference attendees are hardly new to the airline industry or to ALPA work. Capt. Dave Morlando, the recently elected Spirit Council 18 captain rep, has flown for his airline for 11 years and has held numerous ALPA positions, including that of MEC chairman. The A320 pilot said that he got involved because his pilot group's contract negotiations needed bolstering, and he felt he could make a difference.

United's new Council 33 secretary-treasurer, First Officer Jeff Ecklund, described himself as a complainer. A former pilot with Great Lakes, West Air, and SkyWest, Ecklund said that he has been with

United for 8 years, but spent 3½ of those years on furlough. The Denver resident commented that he ran for office because he needed to "take the complaining and do something positive with it."

"To provide a little more horsepower in making changes" was the reason First Officer Fred Herman, Comair Council 37 first officer rep, gave for seeking office. Herman has served on grievance committees for both the Comair and Allegheny pilots and has also flown for Piedmont and CommutAir.

Despite 12 years with FedEx and experience as a council officer and committee chair, Capt. Derek Martin said

that this was his first ALPA Leadership Conference. First Officer Ray Burkett (US Airways) admitted that this was also his first time, despite the fact that he was recently elected to a second term as Council 82 first officer rep.

And yet there were exceptions. Capt. James Harding, the new MEC vice-chairman for Wasaya Airways, said that this is his first airline pilot job and union position. Wasaya is also new to ALPA, as the Canada Industrial Relations Board certified the Association as bargaining agent for Wasaya in January. Harding is a Thunder Bay, Ont., resident and flies the Pilatus PC-12.—JP

player, consolidation will not succeed. The current environment is extremely emotional, and there's too much at stake not to include pilot input."

Rosen cited pilots as an example of the need for labor collaboration, highlighting their training, background, and unique skill set. He discussed the merger talks taking place between U.S. legacy airlines and the opportunity they presented for pilots as early participants in the process."

### Pilots serving pilots

Capt. Chris Beebe, ALPA's vice-president-finance/treasurer, shifted gears to examine the advantages of ALPA membership and the myth of the ALPA agenda. "There is no 'Herndon black hole,'" he said. "All of our pilot members are ALPA. It's time we collectively looked in the mirror."

Beebe's impassioned presentation emphasized that ALPA's elected council officers represent their members as they choose, unlike some other pilot unions that impose direction and leadership from the top. ALPA's approach, often referred to as "Independence Plus," comes with both responsibility and accountability. "This is your union.... You need to be both unified and credible with your pilots and your management," he added.

Capt. Bill Couette, ALPA's vice-president-administration/secretary, provided a thorough explanation of the Association's governance structure and policy. He said, "ALPA's Constitution and By-Laws provides the framework for what you will do as LEC officers, and yet you have the power to change that framework. Review this document carefully and make sure it suits your needs." (See "Weighing In," page 8.)

### Part of something bigger

AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka discussed the current U.S. financial crisis and explained how it can be



**LEFT: ALPA's Leadership Conference Committee chairman, Capt. David Farmer (Northwest), welcomes participants, noting, "We have a lot of common challenges." BELOW: Jim Wilson, assistant director of ALPA's Representation Department (second from right), during a break-out session, outlines the steps for processing a grievance.**



attributed to flawed economic policies of the last 30 years. He talked about how bargaining power has shifted from workers to employers, which "has allowed them to outsource work, deregulate industries, deny wage increases, and walk away from their obligations to provide health care and retirement security to their employees."

The Federation's secretary-treasurer discussed the erosion of the middle class. "Over half of all economic growth since 1973 has gone to the richest 10 percent of America's families, most of it to the top 1 percent," he said. "Whereas we used to grow together as a nation, today we are growing apart—economically, socially, and politically."

Trumka stressed that Wall Street can no longer be allowed to control our national economic policy. "We must dismantle the corporate agenda and build a working families' agenda so that we can reestablish the balance of power

between workers and their employers, rebuild the relationship between wage growth and productivity, and restore the American Dream. By doing so, we can change the direction of our country's economic policies to ensure that the economy meets the urgent needs of the majority of the people."

Brendan Kenny, director of ALPA's Government Affairs Department, emphasized that government shapes these policies and stressed the importance of the Association's Decision 2008 campaign to consider the endorsement of a U.S. presidential candidate. Kenny outlined the wide array of relevant legislation confronting Congress and the importance of future political appointees to the success of ALPA campaigns. He talked about the tangible value of "raising money through voluntary contributions (ALPA-PAC) for pro-ALPA, pro-worker, and pro-labor candidates." 🗳️