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**D**on't think it matters to pilots who the next U.S. president will be? Think again. Even if you don't like any of the presidential candidates, take a moment to look beyond the person who will occupy the White House. Instead, think about who might be named U.S. Transportation secretary, FAA adminis-

Decades later, in return for support from ALPA and other influential airline labor groups, President John F. Kennedy appointed a labor-friendly individual to the Civil Aeronautics Board (the U.S. government agency that was then responsible for accident investigation and economic regulation of the airlines), shifting the majority vote of the five-member board to a pilot-favorable world view.

These examples demon-

### The Pullman lesson

Before the days of pilots and airlines, the United States depended heavily on the railroads for transportation and interstate commerce. Although railroad workers were often organized, the labor movement had yet to recognize the value of court- ing friends in government.

In 1893, employees of the Pullman Palace Car Company were required to live in what was called "Pullman City," a 3,000-acre plot

much of U.S. railroad traffic and posed a direct threat to businesses that relied on this industry for delivery of their products.

On July 2, an injunction from a federal court declared the strike illegal. When the strikers did not return to work the next day, the federal government intervened more directly. President Grover Cleveland (a Democrat) sent troops to break the strike, and heads were literally bashed in the process. ARU President Eugene V. Debs was arrested and subsequently imprisoned for disregarding the injunction.

While those leaders were brave, heroic figures, one would believe the outcome of this incident would have changed if Debs or the other involved labor leaders had established a relationship with President Cleveland or members of Congress. But in the wake of this tragedy, unions began to see the light.

### A broader perspective

American labor leader Samuel Gompers was president of the American Federation of Labor (AF of L) during the Pullman affair. In

# DECISION 2008

## LESSONS LEARNED

### POLITICAL ACTION GIVES ALPA AN EDGE.

trator, and National Mediation Board member. The president appoints those who most affect pilots' lives.

ALPA's founder, Capt. Dave Behncke, knew this all too well. He developed a close working relationship with the New York mayor and influential national politician, Fiorello La Guardia.

Behncke persuaded La Guardia to help the Association exclude pilots from the 1933 National Recovery Administration Code, which would have allowed airline managements to institute exceptionally low rates of pay and dangerously high monthly flight-time limits for pilots.

strate how valuable a friendly White House and Congress can be to organized labor, and how an unfriendly or unengaged government can be equally devastating—especially to airline pilots.

"We know from our history that the attitude and actions of the White House can make or break you," says ALPA's president, Capt. John Prater. "Our profession and our airlines are under assault with threats to cabotage and foreign-ownership rules, proposed changes to safety and security regulations, excessive and burdensome taxes and fees, and the bankruptcy code. No one yearns for change more than pilots."

south of Chicago. Salaries were low, and unsafe equipment and working conditions left hundreds injured or dead. Employee wages were slashed by 25 percent with no dispensation offered for rent and little lenience offered to "debtors."

On May 11, 1894, 3,000 Pullman workers, many of whom were members of the American Railway Union (ARU), declared a "wildcat" strike. On June 20, the larger ARU, having given the matter its full consideration, served notice that beginning June 26 its entire membership would no longer work trains that included Pullman cars. This boycott crippled



**ALPA's founder, Capt. Dave Behncke, right, developed a close working relationship with New York's mayor, Fiorello La Guardia.**

watching this and other labor events unfold, he realized the value of making political connections. He developed a three-pronged strategy as a means of applying political leverage on the labor front. He worked to fulfill the following goals:

- Promote an independent labor agenda.
- Seek out candidates who would support labor issues.
- Mobilize union members to vote for these union-friendly candidates.

Gompers' strategy worked. The AF of L helped start the National Civic Federation, an alliance of businessmen willing to work with unions and moderate union leaders. During World War I, Gompers worked with President Woodrow Wilson to avoid labor unrest and help maintain the United States' wartime production.

Wilson rewarded Gompers by appointing him to the Council of National Defense, where he convinced the president to establish a wartime labor policy that, for the first time in U.S. history, outlined government support for trade unions and collective bargaining. Gompers also served as president of the International Commission on Labor Legislation at the Versailles Peace Conference at the end of the war.

Gompers leveraged this relationship to legitimize trade unionism in the eyes of the government, and union membership soared into the millions during this period.

### Modern history

Fast forward to 1992, when then-ALPA President Randy Babbitt announced, "For the first time in our 61-year history, the Association is endorsing a presidential candi-

date—Gov. Bill Clinton.... As you can see from his responses to questions posed by us, he supports the goals and principles of organized labor. He wants a ban on permanent replacement workers, and he understands and agrees with our views on cabotage and foreign control of airlines."

Babbitt went on to say, "We broke from our tradition of nonendorsement because now is the time to take a stand against policies

therefore somehow above the hurly-burly of labor politics. Pilots must see themselves for what they are, a seriously threatened segment of U.S. labor."

Both sets of comments ring eerily familiar in today's airline industry in which today's airline pilots face even greater challenges.

### What a difference an administration makes

The Clinton administration of the 1990s was a boon to

than 60 recommendations for reviving the U.S. airline business. The report's proposals covered three areas: technological and institutional changes to promote efficiency, particularly in regard to air traffic control; reductions in taxes and user fees to make airline operations more profitable; and the government's encouragement of airlines to take advantage of current and new global markets. Although some of these is-



**The Clinton administration was instrumental in supporting ALPA's One Level of Safety. The DOT used the Association's slogan on its banner during its press conference.**

that have caused more than one-fifth of the U.S. airline industry to file for bankruptcy, ... against government support of antilabor elements ... against trade policies that would devastate U.S. workers and the U.S. economy."

A United pilot, Capt. G.D. "Jock" Savage, commented in "Pilots' Forum," "The old 'association, not union' attitudes will no longer suffice in today's union-busting environment. We can no longer afford the elitist affectation of being a 'professional' and

U.S. airline pilots and the industry as a whole. Consider this:

"One item that has the potential to have the greatest impact on the airline industry since its deregulation in 1978 is the Clinton administration's formation of a 22-member national commission to study and make recommendations on how to rescue our air transportation system," said then-United MEC chairman, Capt. Roger Hall, during a March 9, 1993, presentation to the United Airlines Union Coalition.

The National Commission to Ensure a Strong Competitive Airline Industry, which included Babbitt as a member, provided Clinton and the Congress with more

issues have seen real progress, not all of the Commission's recommendations have been fully implemented.

Managers have often had free reign on the airline industry when supportive presidents were in office. However, during Clinton's administration—at ALPA's urging—the Department of Transportation rejected Frank Lorenzo's bid to operate ATX (a low-fare, East Coast operation) as an airline, citing past safety and regulatory compliance problems experienced by airlines that Lorenzo had previously run.

According to an April 6, 1994, *New York Times* article covering the story, "The



agency said both Eastern Airlines and Continental Airlines, while they were owned by Texas Air and controlled by Mr. Lorenzo, 'experienced operational, maintenance, and labor-related problems that were among the most serious in the history of U.S. aviation.'"

ALPA did everything it could to keep the nefarious

Administrator David Hinson held a press conference at DOT headquarters on Dec. 14, 1995, to announce two final rules on commuter airline operations and training that raised the safety standard of Part 135 operations to the Part 121 level.

Next, Clinton lifted a ban President Ronald Reagan had placed on hiring air traffic controllers who participated in the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization strike of 1981. At ALPA's urging, Clinton also signed a

our resources into fixing errors, not fixing the blame."

Helping the airlines return to financial stability while protecting airline employees was a common theme during the Clinton years, but how would the president respond to pressures to keep major U.S. airlines operating during collective bargaining disputes?

### Bad news at American

The American Airlines pilots, represented by the Allied Pilots Association, were in a bargaining deadlock with their management the night of Feb. 15, 1997, the end of a 30-day, cooling-off period before the pilots could declare a strike. The Transportation Department announced that a strike could cost the U.S. economy as much as \$200 million per day. Kenneth Hipp, a mediator assigned to the negotiations, told the press, "There are major problems that have to be resolved between now and midnight."

Minutes after the APA declared a work stoppage, Clinton, using his authority under Section 10 of the Railway Labor Act, intervened and ended the strike, declaring a Presidential Emergency Board. Clinton's PEB was the first presidential intervention in an airline labor dispute in 31 years.

The PEB is a controversial device. After a 30-day cooling-off period in the contract negotiations process, the Act specifies that the National Mediation Board can notify the president that, in its judgment, the labor dispute "threaten[s] substantially to interrupt interstate commerce to a degree such as to deprive any section of the country of essential transportation service."

**"WE BROKE FROM OUR TRADITION OF NONENDORSEMENT BECAUSE NOW IS THE TIME TO TAKE A STAND AGAINST POLICIES THAT HAVE CAUSED MORE THAN ONE-FIFTH OF THE U.S. AIRLINE INDUSTRY TO FILE FOR BANKRUPTCY..."—PRESIDENT RANDY BABBITT, ON ALPA'S ENDORSEMENT OF BILL CLINTON IN 1992.**

Lorenzo from reentering the U.S. airline industry, including running an ad in *Roll Call*, the Capitol Hill newspaper covering Congress, stating that letting Lorenzo run another airline would be like letting 1980s-era, convicted insider-trading moguls Michael Milken and Ivan Boesky "return to the scenes of their crimes."

The Clinton administration was instrumental in supporting ALPA's "One Level of Safety," a campaign that pushed for FAR Part 135 commuter airlines, flying airliners with 10 or more passenger seats, to fall under the same rules that apply to FAR Part 121 operations with airliners that have 30 or more seats. ALPA had been pressing for this kind of regulation since the 1970s.

The campaign was a success. Transportation Secretary Federico Peña and FAA

law that prohibited the states where employee pensions were earned from reaching beyond those borders to tax retirees who had moved—a practice known as source taxing.

Rodney Slater, Clinton's second transportation secretary, announced in a Jan. 14, 2000, press release that the president had approved "an important advance in gathering aviation safety information to prevent accidents before they occur through a key government-management-labor partnership." That advance was the Aviation Safety Action Program (ASAP), an agreement among the FAA, the airlines, and the unions to "encourage voluntary reporting of safety issues to the aviation industry and the FAA by pilots, mechanics, airline dispatchers, and flight attendants—putting

# POLITICS MATTER: POLITICAL APPOINTEES MUST DO MORE THAN 'A HECKUYA JOB'

**By Edward Wytkind**  
President of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO

**C**ome November, your safety, security, and day-to-day job as a professional airline pilot will be on the U.S. presidential ballot.

As you vote for president, you are empowering one person to name all the political appointees who run the agencies that affect pilots: the Department of Transportation, the Federal Aviation Administration, the National Mediation Board, the Transportation Security Administration, and the National Transportation Safety Board, among others.

For professional airline pilots and union members, politics matter. The number of jobs in Washington that change with the advent of a new administration is staggering. And the power the new appointees wield in the form of carrying out the White House's mission for their agency is enormous. So as we near the end of ap-

pointees of the caliber of Hurricane Katrina “you’re doing a heckuva job, Brownie,” it’s worth revisiting important issues at stake and how leaders in the next administration will tackle these issues.

The next president will appoint National Mediation Board members who will preside over labor/management relations including bargaining disputes and organizing drives. The current NMB has ignored the rights of workers. For example, pilots of Atlantic Southeast Airlines had to wait five years before the NMB, at ALPA’s urging, took steps to bring the process to a successful conclusion. By contrast, in 1998, President Clinton and his NMB refused to intervene in the Northwest Airlines ALPA/management dispute. The pilots were permitted to exercise their rights without government intervention, and eventually a successful agreement was reached.

Will we have another president and appointees who subvert the law and exacerbate the deteriorating state of working America? Or will we have an NMB that ensures the right to organize and bargain collectively and helps resolve labor-management disputes?

The next president will appoint negotiators who will determine whether foreign carriers can control U.S. airlines. The future of this industry hangs in the balance as we enter the second stage of the U.S.-EU Open Skies agreement. The Bush administration’s appointees have attempted an end-around our ownership and control rules. Will the next

crop of negotiators continue to give away the store to our trading partners? Or will we have trade representatives who put U.S. pilots and other workers first?

The next president will appoint a TSA administrator who will determine if we’ll finally get a universal biometric screening system for aviation workers. This program has been 20 years in the



making. Will we get new leaders who allow a hodge-podge system to continue? Or will we have a TSA that streamlines access procedures, delivers one level of security, and ensures that airline workers are treated fairly?

The next president will appoint FAA leaders who will decide if airlines can continue to force pilots to work tired. The FAA’s rules are inadequate and antiquated. And the pressure to increase productivity has ratcheted up in this post-bankruptcy era. Will we continue to face stonewalling from an FAA that sides with airlines and refuses to change flight-limita-

tion rules? Or will we have an FAA that understands why it’s foolish to continue “pilot pushing” and, instead, seeks to modernize the rules?

The next President will appoint leaders who will decide whether America will have a first-class FAA. A critical ATC staffing shortage was exacerbated by an Administrator who ran roughshod over collective

select to appoint qualified, competent public servants. We’re not picking just one person—we’re choosing that leader’s vision and the full cast the leader assembles to carry out that vision.

Politics matter. Our engagement matters. Over the next nine months, we will help decide the direction of the United States and the U.S. airline industry. ▸

**“THE NEXT PRESIDENT WILL APPOINT NEGOTIATORS WHO WILL DETERMINE WHETHER FOREIGN CARRIERS CAN CONTROL U.S. AIRLINES. THE FUTURE OF THIS INDUSTRY HANGS IN THE BALANCE AS WE ENTER THE SECOND STAGE OF THE U.S.-EU OPEN SKIES AGREEMENT. WILL THE NEXT CROP OF NEGOTIATORS CONTINUE TO GIVE AWAY THE STORE TO OUR TRADING PARTNERS? OR WILL WE HAVE TRADE REPRESENTATIVES WHO PUT U.S. PILOTS AND OTHER WORKERS FIRST?”**

—EDWARD WYTKIND

bargaining rights. Critical aircraft maintenance—some estimates say 25 percent of all work performed—is now outsourced to foreign stations that are not required to test their workers for drugs and alcohol, are not subject to strict FAA oversight, and are not required to follow any security rules. And the safety needs of domestic airline workers have been shortchanged. Will we continue to have an FAA that ignores congressional mandates and refuses to bargain with workers in good faith? Or are we going to have an FAA that works with its employees to deliver the safest aviation system possible?

It’s up to all of us to choose. And, we are entrusting the chief executive we

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**The AFL-CIO’s Transportation Trades Department (TTD)** consists of 32 affiliated unions, including ALPA, that together represent several million workers in all modes of transportation. TTD advocates on behalf of its member unions before Congress and the executive branch, including federal agencies, to protect good jobs, defend workers’ rights, enhance transportation safety and security, and ensure adequate funding for the U.S. transportation infrastructure. For more information about TTD, visit [www.ttd.org](http://www.ttd.org).



Upon notification, the president may, “in his discretion, create a board to investigate and report on such dispute.” The PEB typically has 30 days to work with the two parties to develop a proposed agreement for their consideration. The delivery of this proposal is followed by another 30-day cooling-off period. During this entire period, both management and the employees must maintain the status quo, which means that they continue to be bound to the terms of the previous contract.

On April 4, 1997, the APA decided to send the latest union-proposed agreement to its members for their review, and on May 5, American pilots ratified the deal.

### The Northwest difference

The Northwest pilots declared a strike on Aug. 28, 1998, after exhausting all other prescribed remedies offered by the RLA. The strike lasted 18 days, and management reported that the airline had lost an estimated \$630 million, not to mention a retroactive \$84 million for labor compensation.

The pilots’ Master Executive Council ratified a new 4-year agreement on September 12, 5 days after it reached a tentative agreement. The TA was reached after 3 intense days of negotiations mediated by the NMB and the Transportation secretary.

“ALPA was completely confident that President Clinton wouldn’t declare a PEB,” then-first vice-president, and now former ALPA

president, Capt. Duane Woerth, recalls. “We didn’t lose one second of sleep. Why? Because we brought the full weight of the AFL-CIO and our own support for Clinton to the table. As a result, we were able to focus all our efforts on preparing for the strike.”

The contract provided a 12 percent pay increase over 4 years, profit-sharing and stock options, and protected the pilots’ long-term job security. Additionally, the contract allowed Northwest the ability to compete both globally and domestically.

“A special thanks goes to President Clinton for his demonstrated leadership and for providing the necessary support through his resources to ensure a negotiated contract settlement,” said then-chairman of the Northwest MEC, Capt. Steve Zoller. “His actions have strengthened and preserved the integrity of the collective bargaining process for working men and women.”

So what was the difference? Why did Clinton intercede in one case but not the other?

Babbitt speculated about the American situation in his March 1997 “President’s Forum” in *Air Line Pilot*: “We are well acquainted with the need to marshal the support of Congress and the executive branch to bear whatever political influence is necessary in such circumstances. Our affiliation with the AFL-CIO, our support within the current administration, and our collective strength in numbers and preparedness would have brought about a very different scenario.”

Commenting on the Northwest pilots’ success sometime later, Babbitt added, “The support we re-

ceived from Capitol Hill and the White House during this struggle was clearly a dividend from our long-term investment in the U.S. political process. Our access to the White House played a pivotal role in the successful

ment to educate them about pilot issues and to advance ALPA’s legislative and political agenda.

The ALPA Government Affairs team manages ALPA’s Political Action Committee, ALPA-PAC, which is used to



**THE ALPA GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS TEAM MANAGES ALPA’S POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE, ALPA-PAC, WHICH IS USED TO PROVIDE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO CANDIDATES FOR U.S. FEDERAL ELECTIVE OFFICE WHO ARE COMMITTED TO ADVANCING PILOTS’ INTERESTS.**

outcome of this strike. Frankly, had we lost the battle in Washington, D.C., the Northwest pilots would have reached no contract settlement in Minneapolis.”

In essence, Babbitt made clear that ALPA’s political connections and the efforts of the Association’s Government Affairs Department made the difference for ALPA pilots.

“During the Clinton years, you didn’t get an appointment to any of the key federal agencies without passing through 1625 Massachusetts Avenue and getting the ALPA stamp of approval,” Woerth says.

### Who are those guys?

Government Affairs serves as the liaison between the union’s pilot members and Congress, the administration, and the federal departments and agencies that influence the airline industry. ALPA lobbyists work with decision-makers on Capitol Hill and in the federal govern-

provide financial assistance to candidates for U.S. federal elective office who are committed to advancing pilots’ interests. In addition, the Association’s grassroots outreach program helps ALPA pilots connect with their federal representatives to make their voices heard on aviation safety, security, and labor issues.

Famed French general and statesman Charles de Gaulle once said, “I have come to the conclusion that politics is too serious a matter to be left to the politicians.” ALPA’s leaders have long agreed, which explains why the Association is placing so much emphasis on the prospect of endorsing a U.S. presidential candidate in the 2008 elections. ALPA members can shape the political process or let it shape them. Pilots and their elected ALPA representatives must now decide for themselves what the Association’s political fate will be. 🌐