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ALPA Calls Proposed FAA Reauthorization Bill Unsafe and Unfair

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The Air Line Pilots Association, Int'l (ALPA) reviewed the proposed Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reauthorization unveiled today and determined that the legislation, as currently drafted, does not maintain the current level of aviation safety in the United States.

“After months of working with key officials to ensure this crucial legislation focuses on vital safety measures, we are disappointed to see that this bill does not advance aviation safety in our country,” said Capt. Tim Canoll, ALPA’s president. “As the world’s largest nongovernmental aviation safety organization, we have offered our experience as primary users of this system and worked tirelessly to educate Capitol Hill on why safety must be paramount moving forward.”

As drafted, the bill does not address the serious safety risks presented by the unregulated carriage of lithium batteries. It also creates an unfair funding system for the new air traffic organization, and fails to protect access to the cockpit through mandatory physically installed secondary barriers. Instead, the proposed legislation actually degrades safety by undercutting the existing regulations regarding medical certification for general aviation pilots.

ALPA called the reauthorization proposal a “missed opportunity” to properly and appropriately regulate lithium batteries. “Last week, the international community irrefutably acknowledged existing evidence demonstrating that lithium batteries pose a threat to safe air operations. As a result, they recommended moving forward on the first phase in a long-term plan that allows for the safe transport of lithium batteries. However, today’s proposed legislation refuses to recognize the safety risk inherent in the bulk shipment of lithium batteries on passenger and cargo aircraft,” added Canoll.

Capt. Canoll also commented that, “After working with the Senate to pass a legislative solution that ensures we continue to keep unnecessary risks away from one of the safest and most complex aviation systems in the world, today’s bill actually degrades safety by allowing pilots to self-certify their medical qualifications, which will result in unfit pilots gaining unfettered access into airspace shared with the flying public and shippers.

In reviewing the long-awaited proposal for forming a nonprofit air traffic control (ATC) organization, ALPA's initial analysis is that while the structure outlined in the proposal provides appropriate safety measures for the transition and framework for an independent air traffic organization, the financing mechanism is inconsistent with ALPA policy that calls on *all* users operating in the national air space pay a fair share. This version of a new ATC would require that commercial air carriers shoulder the financial responsibility of supporting the operation, instead of having all users pay into the system.

Canoll concluded, "As aviation stakeholders, we have a shared responsibility to advance safety and not move in the opposite direction. While we were pleased to see the committee preserve the safety advancements in training for first officers and flight and duty time for passenger pilots, it is unfortunate this FAA reauthorization proposal misses the mark on so many other levels.

"As the global leader in aviation safety for over eight decades, we will continue our work on improving this bill in order to ensure that our members and the traveling public can continue to fly with confidence in the safest mode of mass transportation in history.

"Moving forward, we will redouble our efforts with our partners in Congress to usher a safe bill through to the finish. It is imperative that we focus our efforts on providing a FAA reauthorization bill that provides long-term, reliable funding to safely operate our air transportation system and execute the next-generation air traffic reforms that will bring additional safety and efficiency to our system," concluded Canoll.

Founded in 1931, ALPA is the world's largest pilot union, representing more than 52,000 pilots at 30 airlines in the United States and Canada. Visit the ALPA website at www.alpa.org or follow us on Twitter @WeAreALPA.

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CONTACT: ALPA Media, 703-481-4440 or Media@alpa.org

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