

Prater Outlines ALPA Agenda on Capitol Hill

ALPA's president, Capt. John Prater, together with AFL-CIO Transportation Trades Department President Edward Wytkind and other aviation labor leaders, met with U.S. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) on April 24 to jumpstart S. 1300, the Aviation Investment and Modernization Act. The "FAA Reauthorization Bill," as it is also known, has been languishing in the Senate for nearly a year.

S. 1300, if enacted, would amend Title 49 of the United States Code to fund the FAA for 4 years, but more importantly, it would modernize air traffic technologies and introduce much-needed aviation safety and capacity improvements. The legislation calls for a satellite-based ATC system that could manage more air traffic and ease congestion. The bill would also toughen standards for overseas maintenance facilities that U.S. airlines use, address runway incursions, and initiate a study on pilot fatigue.

"The Senate has had more than enough time to debate the future of the national air transportation system,"

Prater said. "Our government needs to step up to the plate and give the FAA the tools it needs to get the job done."

Prater's visit appears to have made a difference, as the Senate 5 days later approved a measure to start a floor debate. However, the bill was tied up for the following 2 weeks with discussions about legislative provisions unrelated to aviation. On May 6, an attempt to

mended increasing fuel taxes for these users. Ultimately, the two eventually struck a deal to raise aviation fuel taxes from 21.8 cents to 36 cents per gallon.

A Congressional Budget Office estimate (July 17, 2007) speculates that implementing the FAA reauthorization package could cost \$49 billion during the 2008–2012 period, based on the appropriation of the outlined amounts.

"The transition to NextGen will be absolutely necessary if [the United States] expects to handle air travel that is projected to increase to one billion passengers per year by 2015 and double current levels by 2025."—Capt. John Prater

limit debate and move the bill toward final passage failed, leaving it in limbo. Congress must once again prepare an extension of the current FAA authorization that will presumably last through the fall of 2009.

Senate Commerce Aviation Subcommittee Chairman Jay Rockefeller (D-W.Va.) described the debate in early May as "the most frustrating week I've spent in the Senate in my 24 years here."

Picking up the tab The initial stumbling block for this legislation was the appropriate source of funding, particularly for the new-technology items. The Senate Commerce Committee has supported a \$25-per-flight surcharge for corporate aviation to ensure that this segment of the industry pays its fair share. Alternatively, the Senate Finance Committee has recom-

Get it done

Prater commented, "ALPA appreciates the Senate's recent attention to this important legislation, but the current gridlock will negatively affect the already-burdened air transportation industry. The airline industry needs a friend in the White House to influence this process and put an end to the partisan politics that have allowed this bill to languish for so long."

The government has until the end of June to act before the FAA's current funding extension (PL 110-190) expires. Lawmakers have extended FAA funding four times since it first expired in September 2007, when the House of Representatives passed its version of the FAA Reauthorization Bill, H.R. 2881.

Despite the delays in the Senate, Reid has left open the possibility of revisiting the bill later this year. If the full Senate ultimately approves S. 1300, leaders from both the House and Senate will appoint members to a conference committee that will reconcile the differences between the two bills. The final version would then be voted on by both bodies and, if passed, sent to the U.S. president for signature.—*John Perkinson, Staff Writer*

ALPA's Safety Priorities

ALPA's president, Capt. John Prater, has urged members of Congress to enact the FAA Reauthorization Bill, which includes the following:

- Modernization of ATC systems to include satellite (GPS and ADS-B) technology
- Improved runway safety
- Reduction of fuel tank flammability, mandated by FAA rule
- Examination of pilot fatigue
- Development of a wake vortex mitigation system
- Inspection of foreign maintenance facilities
- Improvement in aircraft rescue and firefighting standards
- Defined policy for airline citizenship
- New standards for flight-time and duty-time limits and rest requirements. 🌐