



July 19, 2022

Oppose Legislation to Increase Pilot Retirement Age

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the undersigned unions representing professional airline pilots and thousands of aviation workers who support strong safety standards, I urge you to oppose any legislation that increases the pilot retirement age.

In 2007, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), under the direction of Congress, implemented the Fair Treatment for Experienced Pilots Act (P.L. 110-135), which increased the pilot retirement age from 60 to 65. This is aligned with the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the international body governing civil aviation, which currently precludes airline pilots from operating internationally starting at age 65. There is currently no discussion for the ICAO to change the standard and increase the pilot retirement age beyond 65.

Changing the retirement age for pilots in the United States will not increase the supply of pilots but instead have many unintended consequences for passengers and junior pilots. Increasing the pilot retirement age would force pilots over 65 to leave desirable international routes to fly domestic routes often operated by smaller aircraft that operate more frequently. This requires retraining on different equipment, which increases costs to airlines and pilots who must spend additional time and resources to receive training. In addition, pilots over 65 would displace pilots on domestic-only routes putting the future pilot pipeline at risk.

According to the FAA, nearly 8,000 newly certificated pilots have been produced in the last 12 months, exceeding recent years. There are currently about 1.5 certificated pilots relative to demand, according to FAA and Bureau of Labor Statistics data.

To be clear, the discussions related to increasing the pilot retirement age are intended to be a quick fix to the false narrative of inadequate pilot supply and another excuse for some airlines to water down pilot training requirements and flight experience time. However, the real problem is airline management's poor planning for a pandemic recovery. Airlines furloughed, displaced, and moved pilots out of their seats and off of their aircraft. As a result, airlines are now forced to needlessly retrain pilots, resulting in a training backlog of their own making.

Hardworking Americans who flew throughout the pandemic at significant risk to themselves and their families worked hard to keep airlines operating. And while airlines are looking for ways to boost revenue and shed labor costs, passengers have recently seen a spike in flight delays, cancelations, and cuts to air service to rural and small communities that stem from profit-based business decisions.

There are many unintended consequences to increasing the pilot retirement age, and it's critical that Congress put the safety of passengers and aviation workers first. Transportation labor will always prioritize safety, and we urge you to oppose any legislation that would increase the pilot retirement age.

Sincerely,

Air Line Pilots Association
Association of Flight Attendants, CWA
International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers
National Air Traffic Controllers Association
Professional Aviation Safety Specialists
Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO
Transport Workers Union of America