

The Way It Has To Be (Attachment 1)

Sullenburger testifies to Congress.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CRvy2o-hV-Y>

February 24, 2009

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Aviation Subcommittee of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee on Capitol Hill in Washington February 24, 2009. FULL TRANSCRIPT OF SULLENBERGER'S CONCERNS SULLENBERGER: While I l..

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FULL TRANSCRIPT OF SULLENBERGER'S CONCERNS

SULLENBERGER: While I love my profession, I do not like what has happened to it. I would not be doing my duty if I did not report to you that I'm deeply troubled about its future. Americans have been experiencing huge economic difficulties in recent months, but airline employees have been experiencing those challenges and more for eight years. We've been hit by an economic tsunami. September 11th, bankruptcies, fluctuating fuel prices, mergers, loss of pensions and revolving-door management teams who have used airlines employees as an ATM have left the people who work for the airlines in the United States with extreme economic difficulties. It is an incredible testament to the collective character, professionalism and dedication of my colleagues in the industry that they are still able to function at such a high level.

It is my personal experience that my decision to remain in the profession I love has come at a great financial cost to me and to my family. My pay has been cut 40 percent. My pension, like most airline pensions, has been terminated and replaced by a PBGC guarantee worth only pennies to the dollar. While airline pilots are by no means alone in our financial struggles -- I want to acknowledge how difficult it is for everyone right now -- it is important to underscore that the terms of our employment have changed dramatically from when I began my career, leading to an untenable financial situation for pilots and their families. When my company offered pilots who had been laid off the chance to return to work, 60 percent refused. Members, I attempt to speak accurately and plainly, so please do not think I exaggerate when I say that I do not know a single professional airline pilot who wants his or her children to follow in their footsteps.

I am worried that the airline piloting profession will not be able to continue to attract the best and the brightest. The current experience and skills of our country's professional airline pilots come from investments made years ago, when we were able to attract the ambitious, talented people who now frequently seek professional careers elsewhere. That past investment was an indispensable element in our commercial aviation infrastructure, vital to safe air travel and our country's economy and security. If we do not sufficiently value the airline piloting profession and future pilots are less experienced and less skilled, it logically follows that we will see negative consequences to the flying public and to our country.

We face remarkable challenges in our industry. In order to ensure economic security and an uncompromising approach to passenger safety, management must work with labor to bargain in good faith, we must find collective solutions that address the huge economic issues we face in recruiting and retaining the experienced and highly skilled professionals that the industry requires and that passenger safety demands. But, further, we must develop and sustain an environment in every airline and aviation organization, a culture that balances the competing needs of accountability and learning. We must create and maintain the trust that is the absolutely essential element of a successful and sustainable safety reporting system ;to detect and correct deficiencies before they lead to an accident. We must not let the economic and financial pressures detract from a focus on constantly improving our safety measures and engaging in ongoing and comprehensive training. In aviation, the bottom line is that the single most important piece of safety equipment is an experienced, well-trained pilot .