



[ALPAWatch Newsletter](#)

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In this Issue...

## **What is Really Going on Within the NWA MEC?**

### **Telling it Like it is Because You Have a Right To Know**

Many of you must be wondering what the heck is going on with our union leadership. Votes of (No) Confidence, statements from various committees proclaiming all is well, accusations of wrong doing on the NWA ALPA Web Boards, our [Oct 7<sup>th</sup> Newsletter about Conflict of Interest](#), and on and on. To fully explain all that is going on would take a novel so here is the shortest version we can manage and still tell you what official communications are conveniently leaving out.

### **Background**

There are two political camps in our union. They constantly disagree and clash over what is the best course of action for this pilot group. This is nothing new, but since bankruptcy these two have become more and more polarized. Each camp has its political strengths. One political camp (group A we will call them) consists of the MEC Officers (Chairman, Vice Chairman and Secretary/Treasure), the ANC and SEA LEC's. The other camp (group B) consists of the DTW LEC and the MSP F/O Rep. The MEM LEC, the MSP C/A Rep and S/O Representative are more centralized but almost always support group A. These two groups disagree on issues, methods, styles, attitudes, values, policy etc.

As for the merger, they both agree with the idea of getting a fair and equitable deal for NWA pilots. Their disagreements are mostly about who is calling the shots, the MEC as a whole or the MEC Chairman. Group A believes the Chairman is the best person to manage this merger. Group B believes the MEC should manage it and the Chairman should be a facilitator of that management. Group A mostly agrees with the management of the merger and the SLI so far, group B disagrees.

The frustration and ugliness comes from their respective voting power. Group A has the most Senatorial votes. Group B has the most Roll Call votes. There are 12 voting LEC representatives in total. The Secretary/Treasure does not vote in DTW, MEM or SEA because there are no Second Officers there. These 12 votes are called Senatorial. On almost all issues of policy or substance, Group A will be on one side with 7-9 of these votes, while group B will be on the other side with 3-5.

Roll Call votes reflect the number of pilots represented by an LEC Representative, i.e. all the Captains in a base are represented by the LEC Captain Rep, First Officers to the F/O Rep and Second Officers (if applicable) to the S/O Rep. So, due to the large size of DTW and MSP, Group B (but with as few as 3 Senatorial votes) represents the majority of pilots at NWA and therefore will prevail on a Roll Call vote. So, most votes go the way of group A unless they are (or sometimes threatened to be) Roll Called.

Senatorial voting is the default method. Some issues are subject to Roll Call, some are not. For example, resolutions are Roll Callable, Elections for MEC Officers (and recall of those officers) are not Roll Callable. See the elements of the conflict yet?

There is nothing wrong with this voting structure. It is designed to balance the power. Small bases have as much voting power as large, unless there is a Roll Call. Within NWA ALPA, instigating a Roll Call is considered to be bullying the smaller bases. So those reps with the most pilots under them are constantly having to play politics about when to use the Roll Call. If they do, they are bullying. If they don't they fail to force the will of the majority. Additionally, as a whole, they place a high value on unanimous votes. They believe it shows a united front, hiding the dissension that really exists. So when discussions leading up to a vote indicates which group will prevail, they often all vote the same to produce a unanimous vote. They think this send a better message. That is what happened on this recent Vote of Confidence Resolution (for the MEC Officers). It passed unanimously (acclimation actually) because group B chose not to Roll Call it. Publicly trying to pass this Vote of Confidence off as proof of unity is disingenuous at best.

Here is what happened with the recent Vote of Confidence for the MEC Officers that passed by Acclimation (unanimous with an exclamation point). This latest episode began with accusations that the Chairman was being overly involved in the SLI

process and making comments that some union leaders found disturbing. The request for a Vote of Confidence (it originally was a Vote of No Confidence, a subtle but important difference) originated from the MEC Officers themselves. They wanted an up or down mandate on their handling of the SLI process, thus quelling the accusations of undue involvement in the SLI process.

The truth is, a number of the LEC reps, mostly group B, voted just the opposite of the way they wanted to. If they had not, the resolution for a Vote of Confidence would probably have been voted down and the MEC Officers might have to have made good on their threats to resign if not given a Vote of Confidence. The LEC's decided that keeping their deep seeded concerns about the conduct of the MEC Officers out of public view was more important. A judgment call they will have to live with. They did not vote their conscience but instead weighed the pros and cons of starting a recall of the MEC Officers and decided that, as much as they would like to do just that, this was not a good time. They didn't want to be the cause of that much disruption during the SLI process. In short they didn't want our dirty laundry in public. Does all this sound unbelievable? Call your reps and ask them if it is true.

The bad blood between these two groups goes way back. But most recently their concerns centered on the SLI process and who is calling the shots, the MEC Officers (Chairman in particular) or the Merger Committee. The conflict is one of interpretation. The agreements in place that are governing this SLI process both allow and restrict the involvement of the Chairman. Being the Chairman allows him access to practically all activities; however, Resolutions authorizing the merger and SLI restrict his access to a facilitation roll. Which one is controlling is the subject of debate and will not be answered before all this is over, if ever. These and many other issues divide these two groups.

Trying to look united is a case of the cure being worse than the disease. Yes we look united, but this also allows minority opinions to often control this union. That does not sit well with the pilot group. The answer is to follow the will of the majority of pilots. That is the way this organization is structured. The MEC Officers work for the LEC Reps. The LEC Reps work for the pilots that elected them. It is a bottom up system. Simple right? Then why does it not work that way? Perhaps it will at Delta, unless we teach them our bad habits.

### **To Tell or Not to Tell**

ALPAWatch is telling you how it really is, because your union is not. We and your union leaders have been wrestling with some of the same dilemmas. Tell all we know and risk looking bad to NWA management, DAL management, DAL ALPA, and the NWA and DAL pilots or be straight forward and set the record straight. Until now, we have chosen our words very carefully, trying not to show just how dirty our laundry is, unless necessary. This Vote of Confidence crosses the line. It is time to

put our dirty laundry out in the open. It is time for everyone, including DAL pilots and DAL ALPA to get a good strong whiff of our dirty laundry.

The fact is everyone; both management teams and much of DAL ALPA have always known how dysfunctional this union is. The only ones being shielded from the truth are the NWA pilots, that is until now. ALPAWatch has built its reputation on being an unbiased, trusted information source. However, we realize that you are not going to read a 20 page email (they are too long now), yet that is what it would take to put some issues into context. Without that context we could not explain everything little issue in a fair unbiased manner. But when it is important, like this is, we report.

### **Smoking gun situations**

When we start investigating an issue, like the events that lead to the Vote of Confidence, which began with accusations of influence peddling with respect to the SLI, we found no smoking gun or bullet holes. We did find some smoke (see [ALPAWatch Newsletter of October 7<sup>th</sup>](#)). We cannot and will not publish stories that can't be substantiated. As reported in the October 7<sup>th</sup> Newsletter, we found the SLI process to be intact and trustworthy. We did get hints of disturbing conduct that can't be verified. We also pointed out the Conflict of Interest problem that still exists today.

Just to be clear, at present we found no reason to be concerned about the SLI process. That means our Merger team, and for that matter both the NWA and DAL Merger teams, are very capable, professional teams that are doing the best job they can at presenting their cases. We expect this to continue unless the NWA Merger Committee is overly influenced by outsiders.

**Our concern is that some participants outside the Merger Committee place a high political value on a negotiated list because of the ALPA resume material a negotiated list will bring.** Therefore an unreasonable push from outside the Merger Committee for a negotiated list verses an arbitrated list may occur in this final phase of negotiations. **All those outside of the Merger Committee need to understand that influence peddling will not be tolerated!** If we find out about any such efforts, we will be quick to expose those efforts.

This endorsement of the SLI process does not mean the results will be to everyone's liking. A fair process is all we are seeking. It is on track and we are determined to prevent a last minute train wreck.

### **Motivation and Timing for Being so Direct**

Our motivation for choosing this time to be more direct with you has several reasons. First, the way this Vote of Confidence is being presented to you is too deceptive to

go unchallenged. The message sent to you about this acclimation vote is that the MEC Officers have the complete support of the MEC. That is false! The truth is it was a political stunt.

The MEC Officers knew they had the Senatorial votes to survive a Vote of Confidence or they never would have called for it. The MEC Officers were gambling that Group B would not Roll Call it because Group B knew they would be blamed for the collapse of the MEC Leadership in the middle of the SLI process. Those are the facts and you deserve to know what is really going on.

Another reason for being so direct is because our union *is* dysfunctional. Our preliminary impression of DAL ALPA is that it works much better than NWA ALPA and is more effective. It is our greatest hope that this merger of the two unions will result in somewhat of a clean start for us. That is, if we can leave behind some of the back stabbing, political power plays, narrow agendas, personal agendas, and petty politics that have hurt this union and its pilots. Watching this group work for the past two years has been an exercise in frustration. It is a wonder we are not in worst shape than we are.

Not to throw the baby out with the bath water, we have many union volunteers that do excellent and tireless work on behalf of the entire pilot group. Almost without exception from the Committees Chairmans down, this is an exceptional group. But individual egos, conflicting values and lingering turf wars combine to thwart the best efforts of the leadership.

And the final reason for being so direct, very soon NWA ALPA will cease to exist. The NWA MEC Quarterly meeting that just concluded in Las Vegas will be the last. The next stop for this MEC is DAL ALPA. Very shortly, elections will be held and the integration of the two unions will begin.

ALPAWatch is very aware of the fact that our role in all this is changing as well. Our plans are to:

- Continue to monitor NWA ALPA till the SLI process is complete.
- **Monitor the integration of the two pilot groups and unions, with an eye on what is fair to all the pilots involved.**
- Next will be to determine what roll if any we have to play within DAL ALPA. To do that we will need to get to know the DAL group as well as we know the NWA group. That process will begin with a formal introduction of ourselves to the Delta pilots, just as we did to the NWA pilots. That formal introduction is the subject of an upcoming ALPAWatch Newsletter.

Thank you again for participating in ALPAWatch. With the participation of pilots such as you, ALPAWatch will be successful in obtaining the Union Leadership that the Pilot Group deserves, and in doing so regain our fair compensation, our quality of life, our future, and our dignity.

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