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Monday Morning Quarterbacks

The inclusion of the Abu-Dhabi preclearance facility in the recent omnibus spending bill is an unfortunate setback for the U.S. aviation industry on a number of fronts. At a basic level, it gives a competitive advantage to foreign airlines, enabling passengers from a particular airport to bypass U.S. Customs lines by “pre-clearing” prior to departure.

ALPA put the preclearance facility issue on the aviation industry’s radar. ALPA led the way and rallied powerful lobbying groups in Washington D.C. to join the fight against funding the preclearance facility, including Airlines for America (of which JetBlue is a member), the Global Business Travelers Association, the powerful U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the AFL-CIO and many others. [Even CAPA](#) rebranded ALPA’s press release as their own in decrying the facility, only joining this fight after ALPA marked the threat for their pilot groups.

Despite our leadership in this effort, DPA is at it again, second-guessing ALPA’s comprehensive efforts to remedy the ongoing failure of decision makers to enact a coherent national aviation policy. Naturally, DPA does not explain how it would deliver results with no PAC, no lobbyists, no permanent presence, and no experience on the Hill.

DPA’s Monday morning quarterbacking is yet another attempt to deflect attention from a shrinking base of support, a blank list of accomplishments, and inability to propose real solutions to hard problems. It comes as no surprise that the DPA is either perfectly naive or disinterested in the fact that most battles fought in D.C. are long-term. Winning in Washington often means setbacks that regularly test the will of any organization. Persistence pays off, and ALPA’s tenacity on the Hill has paid dividends for the Delta pilots.

There can be no greater proof of this than our battle to recoup taxes paid on post bankruptcy distributions. Initial efforts were met with stonewalling, and we were repeatedly told that Congress could not return tax dollars that had already been deposited in the U.S. Treasury without showing where or how that money would be replaced. Despite these roadblocks, our pilot volunteers, with the aid of ALPA National Government Affairs staff and enormous grassroots support found a way and prevailed. The battle literally took years-- longer than the time Delta actually spent in bankruptcy. Certainly the Delta pilots who recouped funds will say the wait was worth it! That same persistence will pay off again on the Abu Dhabi issue and many others.

A similar chain of events brought us Known Crew Member, another “mission impossible” carried out through persistence, experience, and long-term developed relationships with DOT, FAA, and our allies on Capitol Hill.

But the DPA’s serial misrepresentations continue beyond its “armchair flying” discussion of the appropriations bill, and the DPA never lets facts get in the way of its rhetoric. It also

accuses ALPA-PAC of being an instrument of the Democratic Party and President Obama. *ALPA-PAC is the most bipartisan labor union PAC in the nation*, supporting only those candidates who have demonstrated their support for our Pilot Partisan Agenda, regardless of party affiliation.

While other interests carried the day on Abu Dhabi in the omnibus bill, it will not deter our Government Affairs Committee from continuing to engage with both sides of the aisle to pass *H.R. 3488* and eliminate this threat to our livelihood.

Regrettably, that is not the end of the misrepresentations. DPA now claims that ALPA's commitment to organize the JetBlue pilots - a commitment made at the request of those pilots - somehow conflicts with our interests as Delta pilots because of JetBlue *management's* support of the Abu Dhabi facility after the omnibus bill was finalized.

No legitimate collective bargaining organization would assume that a carrier's management speaks for its pilots. To the contrary, one of the primary reasons that JetBlue pilots are seeking to join ALPA is to ensure they have their own voice on legislative and regulatory matters. JetBlue pilots understand that their legislative interests will sometimes differ from those of their company, but does the DPA understand?

Monday morning quarterbacking might feel good, but it never changes the score. The Delta pilots pay for *results*, not *rhetoric*. The Delta MEC Government Affairs Committee fights to protect and advance our profession, and they have the resources and experience to make your voice heard on the Hill. Depending on which version of their ever-mutable constitution you are reading, the DPA's assurance of lower dues and no PAC suggests expensive consequences in Congress and elsewhere for the Delta pilots.

By signing or renewing a card with the DPA, you are taking the pilots off the field when decisions are made about our profession and our industry.