

AA PILOTS FOR ALPA

An Interview with Captain David Webb (Retired)

Captain David Webb (Retired) was the FedEx Pilots Association (FPA) President that led the FedEx pilot group back to ALPA in 2001

We reached out to retired FedEx Captain David Webb to hear his thoughts on bringing the FedEx pilot group back to ALPA in 2001. Enjoy the read!

Dave, we understand when you were the FPA president and were looking at all your options with regards to union representation you selected a pilot who was anti-ALPA to evaluate all other possible unions versus remaining independent. In an abbreviated manner, what were the results of that study?

The FPA commissioned the Representation Research Committee (RRC) in an attempt to put the long standing union controversy to bed before the next contract negotiations. We were still a divided group and knew that would undermine our bargaining efforts. The result of that study was a recommendation from the RRC that ALPA could provide superior resources and assistance. A referendum was sent out to all pilots from the FPA Board. Over 95% of eligible voters cast a ballot and over 90% voted to join ALPA. But what I believe was most important was the process we committed to from the beginning. We had pro independent and pro ALPA members on the RRC. As FPA president, I committed to the members of the RRC that there would be no interference from the officers or the Block Reps. In return I only asked that the evaluation be unbiased and that the RRC members pledge that whatever the majority position turned out to be, they would all stand in unity.

Could you talk about the result of your ALPA merger vote? Do you feel that you negotiated a contract that would have been superior to one had you remained an independent union? Do you think the contract was positively impacted by the solidarity demonstrated to FedEx management as a result of the vote to merge with ALPA?

There is no question that the resources and assistance we received as an ALPA property were superior to what we could have done alone. The plethora of experienced staff at ALPA were instrumental in the preparation of openers, the evaluation of the financial stability of our employer, the analysis of risk to our exiting retirement and insurance benefits. Additionally, the communication staff worked diligently to assist us in making extremely complex issues understandable for all our pilots. Coupled with the extraordinary unity demonstrated by the pilots before and during the negotiations, we were positioned to win.

Can you speak to the level of professional support from the ALPA staff in detail? How did that impact your leadership? Did ALPA ever "tell you what to do?"

One thing often misunderstood about being an ALPA "property" is the level of independence that is afforded and who ultimately will determine the future. ALPA leadership and membership is comprised of pilots. The staff works directly for and is accountable to pilots at every stage. Staff is responsible for determining varying types of risks and making recommendations. Pilots decide to accept or decline that advice and will bear the sole responsibility for those decisions, good or bad.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

I would like to close with these thoughts. ALPA was a very good decision for the FedEx pilots in part because of what the union provides but, most importantly, we embraced our decision together, committed to collective bargaining and leveraged that to achieve an extraordinary accomplishment in the face of a blatantly anti-union management. The pilots at American Airlines have been represented by unions for decades. Those basic questions were answered long ago on your property. Neither the pilots' current APA leadership, ALPA organizers or management will bring the pilots the contract they deserve. The pilots must make that happen themselves. Find your common ground, rally around unity, use the best resources you can find and make it happen. Don't be looking at your shoes when someone asks you in a couple years what you did to make things better.

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