

AA PILOTS FOR ALPA

Frequently Asked ALPA Questions from AA Pilots

Since the APA-ALPA Merger Committee Resolution posted on the upcoming APA Board of Directors agenda, we have received a lot of great questions about ALPA, the merger process, and misconceptions about what joining ALPA would mean for our pilot group. We address them below. Please continue to bring questions to our attention as you think of them!

Want to know more? [More detail below!](#)

[“I don’t understand how ALPA helps us if it is the same people keep getting elected.”](#)

We are not hearing much negative feedback about our reps. That said, a merger would keep them in office during a transition period. The difference is our reps will have a substantially more robust support structure to assist them with their job. Currently they balance family, the company and their APA positions and responsibilities. If they had an underlying structure that helped them do their job more efficiently, then we see that as a good thing. ALPA would provide them with formal training and follow through with additional resources. We think a lot is likely to change over time as they learn to use ALPA’s resources to their benefit and ours.

[“I am concerned about losing our ability to elect our top officers.”](#)

Yes, how we would elect officers would change under ALPA. You remain engaged in the process. To recap, the membership would elect our Local Executive Council (LEC) Status Reps. In turn, our local reps would elect the Master Executive Council (MEC) officers. These positions are the MEC Chairman, MEC Vice-Chairman and the MEC Secretary/Treasurer, which are similar roles to our President, Vice-President and Secretary/Treasurer today. You will have an opportunity to know who these candidates are and let your LEC reps know who you support for these positions before they vote. You could even pass a local council resolution directing your LEC officers how you would like them to vote for MEC Officers.

As a large ALPA carrier, American pilots would be also entitled to an Executive Vice President (EVP) position who sits on the ALPA Executive Council. The American Airlines EVP is elected by your MEC and, once again, you have the right to tell your LEC officers who you would like to see in that position. The President and other three national officers are elected for four-year terms at the ALPA Board of Directors (BOD) meeting held every 2 years. The ALPA BOD is made up of all of the LEC officers throughout ALPA. During the BOD meeting, the American MEC would caucus and meet with the national officer candidates to discuss their election platforms. It would be difficult to get a real sense of a candidate if they had to reach all 60,000 plus members, so your LEC reps are in a much better position to make a judgement on who is most qualified and should be elected. Remember, it is your MEC officers and MEC who do the day-to-day work on your behalf. The national officers have the more global task of running the Association and advancing ALPA’s agenda worldwide.

[“I don’t see how we really get to participate on a national level anytime soon. Why would an American pilot get elected President of ALPA by the others?”](#)

First, American pilots would be afforded an Executive Vice President (EVP) position based upon our size and that position would be filled when we join ALPA. Our MEC would elect the EVP and that individual would serve a two-year term. The EVPs sit on the Executive Council with the National Officers and are very influential in furthering the objectives and policies from the Board of Directors and the Executive Board.

Second, there is no reason to believe an American pilot could not be elected as ALPA President or to another national office. Precedent for this already exists in recent ALPA history. A Continental pilot held the position of

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President a few years following the merger between IACP and ALPA. FedEx's independent pilot union, the FPA, also merged with ALPA, and the current President of ALPA is a FedEx Express pilot.

Third, an airline's MEC Chairman sits on the ALPA Executive Board, interacts with the other MEC Chairman, National Officers and directly with the ALPA President.

If we, the American pilots, had a candidate and the support of our MEC there is no reason to believe that person would not be competitive and have a real chance of being elected to the position they are running for assuming they were the most qualified for the job.

["I think it's time for some real adult supervision!"](#)

Thank you for your input. We actually don't agree with the term "adult supervision." We think our reps are doing a very difficult job with less resources than they deserve. We would like to change the narrative to "professional support" going forward. We are of the opinion that your views of your reps might change if they had access to broader resources and a wider range of advice from support staff. Why not give them a chance with that first? We think with time we will see the change you seek and problems will decrease. Will they completely go away? Never. No organization is that good but we believe we can do better.

["I don't see why I should pay higher dues just to buy my way into an organization with inherent conflicts of interest."](#)

On face, this seems complicated, so let's take a stab at it.

First, yes the dues are higher. We have discussed this in detail on the website but will offer a brief commentary here. The higher dues rate goes to many things, but it offers us the opportunity to "flex" up our support staff at times of need. Buying that level of support as an independent union would be stunningly expensive to retain at all times, so why would it not make sense to share those experts and get them when we need them? The company has plenty of money to staff its people across the table with extremely qualified labor relations professionals. Why would we not want to staff our side of the table with an equal number of equally qualified individuals? We see that as simply an investment that is worth making.

As far as the dues going to pay for a conflict of interest between the regionals and the majors, that is simply a red herring. We do not really want to be so blunt, but it is necessary at times to simply throw the flag down. It is in our best interests to bring the regionals up as far as they can go. It minimizes the company's ability to place downward pressure on the contracts of the majors by closing the wage gap. We deadhead on our regionals. Our families fly on our regional feed. Would you not want them to have the same safety structure as us, for example? Helping them helps us.

This red herring is thrown out almost exclusively on the outside of ALPA. If this was really a problem, the majors would have already left in a block or the regionals would have done the same. At the end of the day, the ALPA pilots, regionals and majors, know they are stronger together than going it alone.

["I understand that there was a contract conflict in 1963 that caused the American pilots to leave and form the Allied Pilots Association. Would that continue to be an issue? Will ALPA always advocate for the interests of the American pilots?"](#)

That is a fair question. First, let's remember the issue occurred almost 60 years ago. A lot has changed since then including the industry, the interests of pilots, APA and ALPA. Like any organization, maturity comes with time and APA and ALPA have certainly done so.

While extremely rare, the president of ALPA has refused to sign an agreement that is believed to be contrary to the best interests of ALPA's membership and those of the specific carrier. For example, this occurred when the President refused to sign an agreement between Mesa Air Group and its wholly owned subsidiary CC Air on the basis that the deal was a whipsaw agreement which would then force lower wages on the Mesa pilots.

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The American Airlines pilots will bring a strong and valuable voice to ALPA. It is much more likely that the American pilots could advance their agenda in whole, or at least in part, by becoming members of ALPA. In the democratic process there is give and take and, rather than having none of an agenda realized, it is often possible to reach a compromise that includes at least part of that agenda rather than none. None is much more likely in these few cases when we stand on the outside rather than working from the inside to affect change.

[“What kind of support does an MEC get during contract negotiations?”](#)

The short answer is, whatever they need. Even during times when multiple carriers are bargaining, ALPA has enough staff to move to each carrier and “flex” up to the needs of each MEC.

[“I keep hearing about the conflicts of interest that exist at ALPA and that airlines have left. Is that true?”](#)

To address your first question, sure, sometimes there are perceived conflicts of interest. However, this is generally something thrown up outside of ALPA to divert attention from the actual facts. The larger carriers know they are better off helping the smaller carriers, and the smaller carriers know they are better off working with the larger carriers. Do you really hear about this at any other time except when pilots are contemplating a move to ALPA? If it really were the case, it would be much more likely that ALPA would have split apart years ago so take it for what it is, inaccurate information and a complete red herring.

As far as your second question goes, yes, there have been pilot groups who have left ALPA. The most recent were Air Canada, FedEx and US Air/America West. FedEx has returned to ALPA, Air Canada is in discussions to possibly return to ALPA and, of course, the US Air/America West pilots find themselves here at American having the discussion of a return to ALPA currently.

[“I understand ALPA supported the change to Age 65 and opposed the FFDO program. That is a problem for me.”](#)

Things are not always as simple as they seem. Let’s address Age 65 first. ALPA was always opposed to Age 65 until they realized, through their extensive Washington, DC network, that the train was coming, and they could get onboard or watch it go by with consequences. The consequences were a complete loss of control of the medical certification process. Therefore, the tradeoff was to drop their opposition to the age increase and reach a compromise on the medical certification process. Yes this hurt the time to upgrade for many pilots, but, with the FAA and Congress saying this was inevitable, ALPA viewed this as an opportunity to work and make Age 65 palatable. There is a current agenda in Congress to increase the retirement age to 67. ALPA is adamantly opposed to any effort to increase the retirement age beyond 65.

As for the FFDO program, within two weeks of September 11, 2001, ALPA President Duane Woerth testified before Congress that a federally approved program to include extensive training and the deputization of participating pilots to carry weapons in the cockpit was a necessary part of securing airliners. No doubt APA and other pilot unions were extremely supportive in forming the program but, flatly, ALPA was not opposed to it and was all in. It should be noted that since the formation of the program, it is primarily ALPA’s Legislative and Government Affairs Department that successfully lobbies Congress annually for continued funding of the FFDO program in the face of calls to eliminate it from the federal budget. In fact, just a few months ago, ALPA sponsored a symposium on the FFDO program where all stakeholders participated.

[“So what do I get for doubling my dues and seeing my staff cut? Who gets the buildings?”](#)

Okay, let’s break down the dues again. First, the dues are not doubled. APA base dues rate is 1% with a flex to 1.5% during contract negotiations. That is where we currently are. ALPA is 1.85% both inside and outside of contract negotiations. On a \$200,000 per year salary APA dues at 1% are \$2000, at 1.5% are \$3000 and at 1.85% are \$3700. For a true nominal dues rate paid to APA and a further breakdown of how ALPA dues are distributed please refer back to our article on Dues on our website. As we have said before, access to the best resources costs money. We

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would like to see our leadership and staff supported by ALPA's support structure and believe the return on our investment is worthwhile.

Speaking of staff, the assertion that our staff would be reduced is highly unlikely and we are not really sure where that assertion is coming from. There exists no basis in fact for the statement. In four recent mergers of independent unions with ALPA, ALPA has extended the offer of employment to all staff members from the incumbent union at no less than their current rates of pay. Frankly, following a merger with ALPA, access to staff will only increase. The merger would also provide an opportunity for upward career progression for our staff members at APA that does not exist today since those staff members would be employees of ALPA moving forward.

The buildings in Dallas and Washington, DC are tangible assets of the American pilots and would be discussed in merger negotiations with ALPA. We don't know what the disposition would be of real estate, but, rest assured, there would be value attached to them during any discussions. We have confidence that whoever would be appointed to a APA-ALPA Merger Committee would properly value our real estate and it would be incorporated in a tentative agreement for the Board and subsequently the APA membership to vote on.

["I don't see why we don't just put our own house in order."](#)

We get it. The simple answer is that we have tried that before. Many times...

Eventually it becomes time to try something else and, as we have also said before, ALPA is not a "cure all" and change will not happen overnight. It will take time. We will learn to trust the advice we get and the best way to use the tools we are given. And sometimes we will falter even with all of that. But much like the United pilots are doing with their current tentative agreement, we will go back to a much larger toolbox, try again and succeed.

["Isn't the APA Board being a little hypocritical by looking at a possible merger with ALPA?"](#)

Actually, we see it as quite the opposite. We think the Board is showing wisdom and leadership. We want to see our Board members have access to the best resources available and continue in their positions, which would occur in the case of a merger. This is one of the reasons we so strongly support a merger versus a card drive that many pilots are advocating for. We want to see a seamless transition with our current representatives remaining in place with a larger and more comprehensive set of tools, which will not happen with a card drive. We feel you should give them that chance first. If the Board is of the opinion that we should look at a better way of representing us, and to some degree all members of the piloting profession, why shouldn't they? It is a tough decision based upon decades of history, but there always times in history that it makes sense to make a big change. We think this is one of them.

What we are seeing is a groundswell of support for a change, and we think the Board is the catalyst for that. We believe the Board has the opportunity here to truly unify the pilot group and demonstrate that unity to the company. So no, we don't view them as hypocrites, we view them as doing the right thing for all of us.

["If ALPA is the best deal out there, then why are there such differences between airlines like UAL and DAL?"](#)

We all know airlines and their employees have certain cultures, some better than others; some, just different. These relationships and cultures change over time and have ups and downs. While not an ALPA carrier, just look at Southwest. Did you ever think they would be informational picketing? Things change.

Regardless of an airline's culture, ALPA provides professional support to their respective member airlines to move the ball forward in the negotiation and enforcement of their respective contracts. The constant is that ALPA assists its carriers in making agreements that work for them. What is important to one member airline may not be as important to another based upon their culture, operation, history or number of other variables. That is the principle of autonomy with oversight.

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“Isn’t the Board responsible for where we are?”

We do not think finger pointing serves any real purpose here. Despite what many think, we know the Board members work very hard at what is usually a thankless job. We have tried to simply call out differences in the two organizations. What we think is worth pointing out is that it is our choice to decide where we go from here and who we think will best represent us. By our choice we mean, collectively, the APA Board and its pilots. However, it is incumbent on you to let your reps know that you strongly support this initiative and are encouraged by their taking up this task. We are all American pilots with a common goal, and it is time to come together and make the decision on how we move forward, together.

“How does this resolution work with the Board? Do we get to vote on it?”

Good question. The first step is for the APA Board to pass the resolution by a two-thirds vote and engage ALPA in merger negotiations to a successful conclusion. The Board would then need to approve the tentative agreement followed by membership ratification. But remember, you get to vote on nothing unless the Board moves forward first. There is no harm in proceeding with merger negotiations that respect our current contract negotiations as a priority, reaching an agreement and letting you decide what course to take. Remember, we are all American pilots. We all share the same goal with respect to an agreement that contemplates our needs.

“I was wondering what, if any, support we have from ALPA national and Joe DePete with this movement to join ALPA.”

In 2000, the ALPA Board of Directors passed a pilot unity resolution expressing the goal of representing all airline pilots in the United States and Canada. ALPA still stands behind that resolution and would therefore welcome the pilots of American Airlines.

ALPA has an organizing division and we have had limited contact with them. As we hold no official capacity, ALPA will not support our efforts beyond providing information we request. As we have also stated, this is a grassroots effort and is funded completely by the American pilots and we receive no financial support from ALPA.

“The resolution reads like the BOD is very interested in a merger with ALPA. Is that accurate?”

We are pleasantly surprised by the level of interest shown by the APA BOD and the resolution brought forth by LAX Captain John Karam. Please continue to send Sound Offs to your elected reps in support of the APA-ALPA merger resolution.

“Is SWAPA considering a similar resolution?”

We are focused on the APA resolution contemplating a merger with ALPA.

“After current section 6 negotiations are over, would a next contract -under ALPA- be an ALPA structured contract? Meaning, would it clean up many of the amendments that have occurred under the current CBA?”

If that becomes a value of the American Airlines MEC, we feel confident that the Negotiating Committee would have the ALPA resources to ensure it happens.

“Do other carriers need a full time contract administration like we have because our contract is so hard to read/interpret for ourselves?”

There is a difference in the of definition of “contract administrator” between APA and ALPA. A contract administrator at ALPA is a labor attorney who is charged with the negotiation, maintenance and defense of the collective bargaining agreement. We believe that using ALPA’s resources we will be able to have future contracts that are easier to interpret.

“What is normal timeline to get a merger completed between an independent union and ALPA? I know it’s hard to say but on average how long for other carriers?”

Historically, this has been between six and twelve months from the passage of the resolution by the independent union.

“When Continental and FedEx came into ALPA, did it disrupt their negotiating cycles?”

No.

“Anything else we can do to support this effort?”

Please continue to send Sound Offs to your elected representatives. Also, talk to your fellow pilots about the benefits of a merger and the APA BOD resolution.

“Has ALPA ever “excused” back dues in a merger?”

In recent mergers, pilots who had obligations to ALPA and the incumbent union were required to satisfy those debts. In prior agreements, ALPA has waived initiation fees for all pilots and has offered flexible payment plans for those with prior obligations.