

AA PILOTS FOR ALPA

The ALPA Structure Part II – Local Representation Explained

Additional information about how ALPA would function at American Airlines.

The first article in this series provided an overview of the structural differences between APA and ALPA on a local level (i.e. specific to our airline). This second article provides additional information on that topic, specific to the role of officers at our airline. In other words, how will the APA President, Vice-President, and Secretary/Treasurer roles work under the ALPA structure?

First, a brief refresher of officer roles in APA versus ALPA: At APA, our union is led by “National Officers.” Our APA National Officers are “national” in the sense that they are the officers for the entire union. However, our union represents the pilots only at American Airlines. The equivalent of APA National Officers in ALPA are known as MEC (Master Executive Council) Officers. That is, “National Officers” in APA = “MEC Officers” in ALPA. “National Officers” under ALPA are those who represent all pilot groups under ALPA, and are the subject of a future article.

The Role of Officers

The officers’ primary role is to implement the direction of the union (as determined by the governing body). Therefore, the relationship between the officers and the governing body is critical. The structure can play a massive difference in how well the union functions.

Under APA, the pilot group directly elects the officers (and as such, the BOD has no say in who is elected). While there may be perceived advantages of this structure, in reality the officers do not work directly for the pilot group and the pilot group has no meaningful way to hold the officers responsible for their performance. Often in the past, the pilot group has elected officers who have opposed the direction of the BOD, creating dysfunction. Even when the officers and BOD are aligned, a lack of trust or established relationship between the BOD and officers could result in the officers being less empowered to do their jobs (and having their authority further limited by the BOD). One symptom of this is nearly weekly BOD meetings. The primary purpose of having officers is to have a couple of people who can represent and act effectively on behalf of the governing body, yet the officers are ill-equipped to fulfill that duty without the support of the BOD.

Under the APA structure, the BOD also has few tools to hold the officers accountable. An officer recall under APA requires 2/3 vote of the BOD followed by a membership vote. This takes substantial time and resources.

Under ALPA, the governing body (called the Master Executive Council or “MEC” – nearly identical to the “Board of Directors” under APA) elects the officers. The election is by way of a senatorial vote (1 vote per representative irrespective of the number of pilots in their domicile). This ensures that the smaller bases have a meaningful vote in officer selection, and it serves as a check/counterbalance to the division-of-the-house/roll-call vote (where representatives can cast votes equal to the number of pilots in their domicile). However, a division-of-the-house/roll-call vote can be used to *recall* an MEC Officer, thus providing the MEC majority the ability to hold the MEC Officers accountable.

Having MEC-elected officers maximizes the opportunity for a productive relationship between the officers and the MEC. Often, the MEC members have long-standing, battle-tested relationships with the officers they elect and have seen, up close, the candidate’s skill set and work product. Not only does the MEC have direct say in who they believe will best execute the MEC’s agenda, but the MEC also has the means to hold the officers directly accountable for performance. An MEC can recall its officers with as little as 24 hours notice.

	APA	ALPA
Officer titles	“National Officers” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>President</i> • <i>Vice-President</i> • <i>Secretary / Treasurer</i> 	“MEC Officers” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Chairman</i> • <i>Vice-Chairman</i> • <i>Secretary / Treasurer</i>
Term	3 years	24 months
Method of election	Membership election: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Nomination round (electronic ballot)</i> • <i>Election round (mail-in ballot)</i> • <i>Possible Runoff round (mail-in ballot)</i> 	MEC-elected: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>1 vote cast by each member of the MEC (irrespective of the size of their domicile)</i>
Method of recall	A two-step process: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Trigger of a membership vote by either (i) a 2/3 vote of the APA BOD, <u>OR</u> (ii) a petition signed by at least 30% of all APA members.</i> 2. <i>A membership vote wherein a majority of membership ballots cast in favor of recall.</i> 	By MEC vote: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>At any MEC meeting, which can be called with as little as 24-hours notice</i> • <i>May be recalled by a 2/3 senatorial majority <u>OR</u> a simple majority by roll-call.</i>

Key takeaways:

- APA National Officers under ALPA are called “MEC Officers”
- MEC election of officers is designed to encourage a productive, working relationship between the MEC and officers and to readily hold MEC officers accountable.

Common question(s):

- Why would I want to give up my ability to elect the union officers?
 - *Under both unions, the officers work directly for your elected domicile representatives and not directly for the pilots. The ALPA structure is therefore designed to maximize the success of the relationship between the elected domicile representatives and the officers.*
 - *The ALPA structure provides the elected domicile representatives the opportunity to elect the officers they believe will most effectively carry out their agenda and with whom they believe they will have the most productive working relationship. The potential for such a working relationship between an officer candidate at the elected domicile representatives is not as easily ascertained by the pilots who often know little more of an officer candidate than what is contained in their campaign literature. Membership-elected officers therefore often disappoint their campaign supporters when they are later unable to deliver on those campaign promises.*
 - *The ALPA structure also provides the elected representatives the ability to promptly recall officers. While recalling officers is not generally a desirable goal for the union, it does provide the elected representatives a simple and effective means to ensure the officers are following their given direction. Under APA, officer recalls are far more difficult and time consuming, thereby making it much more difficult for the BOD to hold the officers accountable.*
 - *The membership is more readily able to hold elected representatives accountable under the ALPA structure, and therefore the elected representatives generally do not elect officers that do not meet the approval of the pilot group.*