

AA PILOTS FOR ALPA

The ALPA Structure Part IV – Large Governing Bodies

Additional information about how ALPA would function at American Airlines.

Why have such a large group of people to set the direction of the union? How can this be managed effectively?

The larger an airline, the potentially larger diversity of interests and points of view that must be represented by the union's governing body. This often results in relatively large union governing bodies. For example, the APA Board of Directors is comprised of 20 members, the United Airlines ALPA MEC has 19 members (2 members per each of its 9 domiciles plus 1 representative from the training department), and the Delta and Fedex MECs number well into the teens as well. Although having fewer people involved on a governing body might lead to less disagreement between its members, the downsides of having a smaller governing body with a large pilot group are that it potentially reduces the number of points-of-view represented at the table and that it provides more power to a fewer number of representatives. Large ALPA MECs manage business efficiently due to a couple of structural designs.

First, the larger ALPA MECs (as well as some of the larger ALPA national governing bodies) use subcommittees for efficient handling of business. This reduces the amount of meeting time necessary to accomplish business, as the bulk of the debate over issues in subcommittee is conducted between a smaller number of people (representative of the majority). Issues that come out of subcommittee are therefore largely "flushed out" before being presented to the larger body for a vote. Each MEC is able to tailor its own procedures into its policy manual, and those procedures can be effectively administered with staff assistance.

Second, the advantages of MEC-elected officers, described in more detail below, can mean less time spent in meetings set for the purpose of effectively "micro-managing the officers." The role of officers was discussed in more detail in a previous article:

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Key takeaways:

- A larger governing body, particularly at a larger airline, is designed to maximize the opportunity for all points of view to be heard and represented by the union.
- The key to managing a large governing body lies in its structure and support.
- Use of MEC-elected officers can reduce the need for MEC meetings.