

Proposed Pilot Training Exemption Puts Flight Safety at Risk

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- [The Flight School Association of North America \(FSANA\)](#)



has announced its opposition to a petition by Republic Airways for an exemption to Congressionally mandated pilot training requirements. In its 10-page submission to the FAA, FSANA argues that the safety of the flying public is at stake if Republic is permitted to cut its pilot training hours by half as requested.

Republic Airways—a regional carrier for American Airlines (NASDAQ: AAL), Delta Air Lines (NYSE: DAL) and United Airlines (NASDAQ: UAL)—recently petitioned the FAA to lower the minimum pilot training for its restricted airline transport pilot (R-ATP) certificate program from 1,500 hours to 750.

“The United States has experienced the safest 10-plus years in the history of airline transportation in large part because of the ‘1,500-hour’ minimum requirement for pilot training passed by Congress in 2010,” said FSANA President & CEO Robert Rockmaker. “If the FAA allows Republic an exemption, it jeopardizes passengers and crew and represents a major step backwards in the hard-fought battle to keep airline travel safe in this country.”

The 2010 Airline Safety and Federal Aviation Administration Extension Act was the first piece of new airline safety legislation to be adopted in over 20 years, brought about by the crash of Colgan Air flight 3407 in 2009, which killed 49 people on board and one person on the ground. It requires airline pilots to complete a minimum of 1,500 hours of flight time under most circumstances.

In its submission to the FAA, FSANA contends that:

- A deviation from regulatory practices that have served to produce the safest period of airline travel in the United States since they were implemented represents a major risk to the flying public;
- Republic’s claim that its training regimen would meet and/or exceed that of military pilot

training is erroneous;

- The exemption would result in a significantly higher turnover rate of Certified Flight Instructors (CFIs) at flight schools, further exacerbating the industry's ability to train new pilots;
- Granting the exemption would open the floodgates for other airlines to reduce their minimum training requirements, causing a snowball effect of safety concerns industrywide.

FSANA is joined in opposition to Republic's petition by the Airline Pilots Association (ALPA), Congress members Brian Higgins and Chris Jacobs of New York, Flight 3407 Families, and Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger, all of whom have spoken out against the exemption.

A recent poll of FSANA membership indicated 78% of respondents were strongly opposed to Republic's petition to lower its training standards. The main concerns of members were centered on their ability to continue operations in the face of high CFI turnover. Many expressed deep uncertainty that they would be able to stay in business, in effect decimating the industry and worsening the pilot shortage.

"Many CFIs are on a path to becoming commercial pilots, building their flight hours while they teach and progressing towards the 1,500 hours required to earn an airline transport pilot (ATP) rating. Cutting the minimum hours from 1,500 to 750 would increase CFI turnover at flight schools, ultimately causing a tremendous bottle neck due to a lack of qualified pilots to teach students. It would make it nearly impossible for flight schools to keep up with the pace of training," Rockmaker said.

"If the FAA grants the exemption, flight schools across the country will face enormous operational challenges. However, safety is the priority, and that is where we're most concerned," Rockmaker added. "Pilots who complete their flight training at Republic's flight school will be eligible to sit in the co-pilot seat of Republic's regional jet aircraft with 50% less flight time under their belt. This would open the door to more pilot error and potential accidents. Coupled with other challenges facing the airlines—from rising costs to personnel shortages in other support areas—this will have a compounding negative effect on the industry."

[FSANA's full response can be found at www.fsana.com](http://www.fsana.com). The public can comment on the Republic request at <https://www.regulations.gov/document/FAA-2022-0535-0001/comment>.

About FSANA

Established in 2009, the Flight School Association of North America (FSANA) is the first and only trade association of its kind dedicated solely to the flight training industry. Headquartered in Allentown, Pennsylvania, FSANA represents flight schools and firms that provide products and services to the flight training or aviation industry.

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