

Re: Proposed Legislation to increase the mandatory retirement age of airline pilots beyond age 60:

It is imperative that before any change regarding the matter above take place, an open forum for all parties involved be held. While it is true that arguments have been made on both sides of the issue for over 20 years, enacting legislation now will sidestep the debate. You simply cannot, in good faith AND honesty, enact legislation dealing with homeland security which includes a "trailer" that is as controversial as this. It is political expediency in its worst form to take advantage of an issue at this time when the larger issues of aviation security (read "national security) are at stake. The age 60 retirement is an issue under the radar screen, as it should be, at this time. There is a crisis in the airline industry with thousands of pilots laid off and thousands more to go. The nature of the airline industry DOES NOT PERMIT lateral movements in career employment. Once a pilot is laid off, the only choice is to wait for recovery in the entire industry. This will take years; all of the airlines are in financial/labor disarray - not just one carrier. By increasing the mandatory retirement age above 60, you will exacerbate an already severe situation.

My comments here do not even address the merits of maintaining the status quo, of age 60 retirement, for which there are many. My comments on this in particular have already been forwarded to you. In short, I have been a commercial pilot for eleven years and employed by Delta Air Lines since 1997. I do not wish to see anyone even a single day over age 60 in my cockpit while crossing the Atlantic in the middle of the night; and if I don't, you don't either. The infinitesimally small special interest that brings this issue to bear could weigh heavily on those who pay for tickets and sit in the back. They expect the FAA to ensure/guarantee their safety. Do not allow the old days of "body count" policies make up for prudent planning.