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Hello Everyone,

Richard Wheeler here again, with one last election message. As we move into October, I wanted to send out a note asking everyone to make sure that they send in their ballot for the nomination of your representatives for Council 20. Local elections traditionally have a very low turnout, and this is our one opportunity to have a direct impact on how we are represented by OUR union.

Naturally, I'd be fibbing a bit if I said that this message was entirely altruistic. I'd certainly like to see you write my name in for nomination for your First Officer representative.

But beyond that, I would like to urge EVERYONE to get involved with the process. How many times have we lost some item in the contract that we personally liked? You call your rep to find out "what gives?", only to hear "well, no one objected, so we didn't think anyone would care". Like any democracy, you need to stay engaged in the process, otherwise you find that people, who may or may not share your personal priorities, take charge, and go in a different direction. Without a good turnout, a small faction may control any election.

We will exchange openers with the company in 2012. The most crucial task I will undertake as a rep is to ensure we arrive at the opener with the best team assembled to negotiate for us, well thought-out priorities, and an effective plan to exert maximum leverage to get what we deserve. Absent this, all "wish-lists" are just idle crew room chat.

This will be the first opportunity to share our concerns and desires with our new DAL friends. While the JPWA contained some improvements (and some steps back), don't forget it is basically the pre-merger

Delta contract, which may or may not suit everyone's needs. Every contract has a history and an evolution that has taken it to where it is now, driven by the environment at that particular airline. While the DAL contract may fit the pre-merger Delta pilots, former NWA pilots might find that framework to be a round hole for a square peg.

We need to move into that contract process with a fresh outlook. While some might disagree, I think it would be very helpful if we had folks at the table with an entirely fresh perspective, from both the DAL side and the NWA side. Without any pre-conceived notions or provincial "we always did it this way" attitudes, I believe we will see an improvement in the process.

Speaking of that process....normally, we get a contract survey in the mail at some point prior to the opening of negotiations. Usually this survey is general in nature, and amounts to "list what you want in order of importance: Pay, rigs, days off, scope, crew meals, etc." There is absolutely no input into the process as to the mechanics of how things work. Someone might have a better idea for handling open time, or has a great idea on selecting reserve periods. My point is that we have a lot of really smart guys and gals at this airline...pilots who find innovative and convenient ways to present open time on the internet, people who have given us unattended booking for jumpseats, and even new seniority integration methods that were fantastic ideas, but simply not thought of by the people "in the union".

To cut these smart people out of the process simply because they don't have the connections to be on a committee I find unconscionable. How many quality of life improvements are we missing out on by excluding the line pilot from the process?

One idea I have for the 2012 contract is to have "Pilot Rountables", which would bring line pilots into the process and have them work directly with the negotiating committee. Everything would be on the table. Management will bring their "A" team and have a deep bench, we should as well.

That brings me to my last topic: Unity. We hear that word bantered around a lot, and it's usually used either as a punch line or used to berate someone who might not agree with a position of the MEC. And while I agree that presenting a united front to management is highly advisable, I strongly disagree with those that argue that any dissent is spreading dis-unity. A unified pilot group is NOT one that agrees with the MEC position because, well, that's what they told us. A unified pilot group is one that has common goals because the group at large decided that those goals were worth pursuing. As an elected rep, I would welcome... no, I would insist on informed dissent, because that is how we discover better ways of doing things and how we "trap" small errors before they become big errors. Communication, both bottom-up and top-down would go a long way in building the unity we will need in contract negotiations, and frankly I would like to see some serious improvement in that area.

I know a lot of those who know me expected a paragraph or two on scope. I really can't say too much more about it. Widebody scope, narrowbody replacements, protecting OUR flying from encroachment from all sides is THE critical issue as we move forward. We can NEVER afford to hear the words "we don't think management will...." from our negotiators.

This LEC election provides our pilots with a great choice of candidates. There are those candidates with a history and experience in politics. There are also those who are fresh on the scene with a clean slate, an open mind and fresh perspective. If you are happy with the direction that we are going and the representation that you have, you can vote one way. If you want a fresh perspective, you can certainly vote in a different way.

They say that whenever you go to a job interview, be sure at some point you actually ask for the job. With that in mind, I would like the opportunity to serve as your First Officer Representative. But whichever way you are leaning, please, take the time to fill out your ballot and send it in. If you have voted one way, and wish to change your mind, in any direction, you can contact ALPA Membership Services at 1-888-FLY-ALPA, extension 3 (or ask for Membership Services). Your ballot must be received at the LEC office by the October 19th. You can also cast it in person at the nomination meeting in DTW at 10am, October 19th at the DTW Westin.

As always, if you have any questions, please send me an email at: richforc20@bellsouth.net

Fair Winds,

Richard Wheeler

P.S. For those really interested, here is a short biography:

Personal:

Born 1967, in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, where I currently reside. Divorced, no children.

In the course of “chasing the dream” I have lived in New Orleans, LA; Daytona Beach, FL; Macon, GA; Huron, SD; New Bern, NC; Tampa, FL; Charlottesville, VA and Minneapolis, MN.

I have a Bachelor’s in Mechanical Engineering from Tulane University (1989), a Master’s in Aeronautical Science from Embry-Riddle (1999), and a 2nd Bachelor’s in Biology from Nova Southeastern University in Fort Lauderdale (2008).

Professional:

I learned to fly at Lakefront Airport in New Orleans (KNEW). I chased around the county with various flight instructor jobs until I landed my first airline job in 1992 at a really tiny outfit called GPExpress, flying the BE-1900. From there I went to Piedmont Airlines, which was really the re-branded Henson, where I worked for 5 years flying the DHC-8.

In 1998 I was hired by NWA.

I lived in MSP for 5 years while flying as SO on the 727, as well as FO. I also took the opportunity to work at NATCO as a Second Officer Instructor and Checkairman. After 9/11, I “elected” to be displaced to the 320, which lasted all of two months before I was displaced to First Officer on the DC-9, and came within a few numbers of furlough. I stayed on the DC-9 until June of 2008, when I bid over to the 757. In 2002, I moved from MSP back to Fort Lauderdale, and have been commuting to DTW ever since. I currently occupy the 76th percentile in the 757 right seat in DTW.

My rather limited ALPA experience includes working on the Membership Committee, the Pilot-to-Pilot Committee and writing several articles for the Transition Working Group (TWG).