



[ALPAWatch Newsletter](#)

[October 26, 2007](#)

First in a Series of Reports

Covering the October 2007 MEC Meetings

I'm Kevin Jones, DTW320FO and one of the founders of ALPAWatch. I attended 3 days of the 4 day (October 16-19) NWA MEC meetings in MEM. I attended as a representative of ALPAWatch. Along with regular union business, the MEC Officer Elections (MEC Chairman, Vice Chairman, and Secretary/Treasure) took place during these meetings.

My goals for attending were to:

Monitor the Election process first hand

Experience an MEC meeting first hand

Meet and get to know all the MEC Representatives and Officers (present and newly elected)

Meet and get to know the Committee Chairman and Committee Members

Establish the credibility of ALPAWatch

Become more educated about how the union leadership conducts business

Make an assessment about the political climate of our union's leadership

Speak to the assembly

Inform the MEC about the feedback ALPAWatch is getting from you

Develop ideas for future ALPAWatch projects to further its objectives

And most importantly, report to you all that I heard and saw.

Before I get into the nuts and bolts you all want to hear, let me describe how the leadership and all others in attendance reacted to my presence and my purpose for being there.

First, I was very well received. Everyone seemed genuinely excited that I was there. Not me personally so much as the fact that any line pilot was there. This may be surprising to some, but this group really does encourage pilot attendance and participation. Frankly, I did not know what to expect but was pleasantly surprised at the openness and hospitality I was shown both from the group and from individuals. I say all this in spite of the fact that I went there as an ALPAWatch representative with a required critical eye, in search of the facts, which they all either knew or quickly came to know.

The second reason things went so well was that I was the only line pilot there...all 3 days! This is both good and bad. More on the bad later but the good was that I got all the face time I wanted. I was invited to attend all the functions, including lunches, dinners, and after hours hospitality. I have attended/hosted many hospitality events in my former business life. They are excellent opportunities for making connections and advancing objectives. This was certainly true here as well. For 3 days, if I was not asleep, I was talking with someone. Without exception, from the MEC Chairman down to every committee member, they all took as much time as necessary to listen and answer my questions. Most all thanked me repeatedly for coming, and perhaps most importantly I was told over and over that they understood what ALPAWatch was trying to achieve and they thought it was a good idea. One MEC member said, as he grasped the ALPAWatch concept, "You are giving the line pilots a window into the leadership." That may not be an exact quote, but I thought it was worth repeating.

This understanding is an important step in the ALPAWatch process. I was not seeking their approval of ALPAWatch as much as establishing ALPAWatch's usefulness and most importantly, its credibility. This goal, along with the others were accomplished.

To prevent these reports from getting too long, I'm breaking them into several separate Newsletters. This one sets the tone and talks about the general events at these meetings. The following Newsletters will describe the actual MEC Officer Elections, the speech I gave the MEC on day 2, the political climate of the leadership, and then what does ALPAWatch need to do next.

One of ALPAWatch's stated goals is to bring you information as in independent source with accuracy and without bias. This organization believes that all NWA Pilots deserve

equal and fair treatment. The issues important to this pilot group span many topics and those issues deserve equal treatment. However one issue hangs in the air and seems to permeate nearly every discussion...the damage done to our contract and careers. That was evident at these meetings as well. Therefore much of what I have to report reflects on that issue.

What Goes on at Those Meetings?

Well, there is a published agenda. Those agenda items are mostly made up of committee reports and proposed resolutions. This meeting also included electing MEC Officers for their 2 year terms. The elections were on day 3. Day 1 and 2 were consumed with committee presentations, MEC Officer reports, a report from Capt. Steve Zoller who sits on the NWA Board of Directors, the report from the NWA ALPA Executive Vice President, and report on Wilson Polling. Many on these reports and presentations are in closed session. Some sessions need to be closed. Some probably do not need to be. I voiced my concern about how many are closed. This is not a new debate. There are some actions being considered that may open more of these sessions. It's a fine line, but most agree that more openness is better. Many members admitted that in the past they sometimes close and just forget to reopen. Unfortunately, open or closed does not matter at most meetings because there are no pilots there to see it anyway. I pointed out the fact that when we encourage more pilots to attend, which ALPAWatch does, they may not come back if they are excluded from too many proceeding.

Being excluded was not always a negative for me. Many committee members are excluded as well and often one or more MEC members may be outside the closed meeting. These situations turned out to be a prosperous opportunity for me to ask questions and have long conversations.

If you want to know the details of the presentation and reports, you can ask the committees for them and read the minutes of the meeting when they come out (<https://crewroom.alpa.org/nwamec/Default.aspx?tabid=753>). If that portion was closed, then ask your LEC representative for their assessment of the presentation. I think they will be able to give some information.

While it would have been nice to hear it all, I don't think there are any earth shattering events revealed in these presentations. Not to diminish their importance to the leadership, the ones I did hear were not that informative to the line pilot. These committees do tremendous work on behalf of all of us. Most of these committees are not glamorous but their work greatly aids our careers nonetheless. The people that work on them are dedicated volunteers. They are not the ones that chart the future of this pilot group. The future is charted by the MEC and the MEC Officers. I was there to get an overall understanding but my focus was on the leadership, their personalities and their politics.

What did I find? Let's start with the simplest explanation I can offer of where our leadership is politically.

Individually and as a group, they are united in the concepts that our contract has been decimated. The company has gotten all it is going to get from us. The contract must be repaired. That repair process has begun and will continue.

Beyond those uniting ideas, they begin to diverge. As a group they are very divided. The divide seems to be centered on efforts to repair the damage done to our contract. Not that recovery must occur, but how urgently, with what intensity, and the risks involved in recovery.

The message I delivered in my speech on day 2 highlighted that division within the leadership and what pilots are telling ALPAWatch. That speech is the subject of the next Newsletter in this series.