The AFA-CWA Government Affairs Legislative Fly-In & Training in Washington DC proved to be an invaluable experience. Attendees—FAs representing Air Wisconsin, Alaska, Compass, Endeavor, Frontier, Hawaiian, Horizon, Mesa, PSA, Spirit, and United—had a first-hand experience on delivering AFA’s mission to ensure job security and improved quality of life. We exercised our First Amendment right to petition the government by reaching out to the offices of 130 Members of Congress over two days. We advocated for defending US aviation jobs with the Fair & Open Skies Act (2019), for clean air in our cabins with the Cabin Air Safety Act (2019), and for the implementation of 10 hours uninterrupted rest. We asked Congress to (1) cosponsor the Fair & Open Skies Act and the Cabin Air Safety Act, and (2) create pressure on the FAA & DOT to implement 10 hours uninterrupted rest since it became law nearly a year ago.

Before heading into Capitol Hill’s offices, we learned what technical arguments to make, forming a fraction of the strategy to advance our issues through the legislature. The other component was to attach personal experiences, humanizing our cases, and further validating our purpose in DC. Staff members we met with were empathetic and receptive to FAs experiencing episodes of fatigue and toxic fume events. Informing our legislators of the issues we face is proving to be successful; since our meetings, an additional 31 House Representatives have cosponsored the Fair & Open Skies Act. It’s difficult to imagine that we’re still fighting for safe working conditions, but it’s the reality.

The core of our time was spent promoting issues that FAs are facing; however, we also recognized the retired coal miners who are fighting to keep their pensions and for the GM employees currently on strike. We sent a clear message of unity and that regardless of our professions, we stand up for all workers’ rights. Lastly, I realized while working among FAs from various airlines that although we may wear different uniforms, as aviation’s first responders, we share the same safety and security responsibilities. By continuing to work together for a common purpose, we will improve our work environment to ensure a safe means of transportation for everyone.

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