

I rise today in support of H.R. 3371, the Airline Safety and Pilot Training Improvement Act.

On February 12, 2009, 50 lives were lost when Continental Flight 3407 crashed outside of Buffalo, New York. This was truly a national tragedy, one that has raised serious concerns about the safety and oversight of our nation's aviation system.

I would like to take a moment to honor the lives of three of the passengers on Flight 3407 from New Jersey's 12th Congressional District, which I have the privilege to represent in Congress. I have spoken with and heard from their families and friends, and my thoughts and prayers go out to them as they cope with the loss of these outstanding individuals. As they mourn, they have been vigilant in working to ensure that we address the serious safety concerns that led to this crash.

Lorin Maurer from Princeton was a fundraiser for the athletics division of Princeton University. According to her coworkers she was a bright and rising star. She was also a dedicated volunteer for the Greater Princeton Junior League. According to her fellow volunteers she was "an enthusiastic woman who not only had great ideas for improving our community, but took the actions necessary to achieve our goals." I would like to thank Lorin's boyfriend Kevin Kuwik for his hard work on behalf of the families of Flight 3407.

Ron Gonzalez of North Brunswick was a tireless advocate for his community. According to his sister he was a true advocate for life. His humanitarian efforts included running the New York City Marathon, and volunteering for the New York State Healthy Heart Program, HIV AIDS Community Services, and the New York State Prevention Planning Group. Ron worked at New Brunswick Tomorrow where he managed a school based program for at-risk children within New Brunswick Public Schools. During Ron's tenure with New Brunswick Tomorrow, he worked hard to save children who were in crisis due to domestic violence, drugs, gangs, and other social ills. His passing is a great loss to our community.

Coleman Mellett from East Brunswick was a talented jazz guitarist. Coleman's talent was evident from a young age. He came in second at the scholarship competition at the East Coast Jazz Festival while he was still in high school. Coleman played with a number of talented musicians including Chuck Mangione's band. He also released the solo album Natural High in 2007 which demonstrated the depth of his talent. I can only imagine the music that we have lost

with Coleman's passing.

Many of the family members of the victims of Flight 3407 are at the Capitol today to remind us that we in Congress need to take action to prevent another tragedy of this scale.

A series of National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) hearings exposed the disturbing fact that this tragedy was preventable. The pilots had received inadequate training on how to recover from a stall and how to proceed in icing conditions. Severe pilot fatigue also was identified as the cause of the crash. The NTSB found that regional carriers are held to lower safety standards than national carriers despite regional airlines' accounting for one-half of all scheduled flights in the United States. As a result, five of the last seven fatal commercial plane crashes involved regional carriers.

As more Americans rely on commuter airlines for air service, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) must take aggressive action to ensure that there is no difference in the level of safety provided by different air carriers. However, the NTSB hearings also made clear that the FAA has failed to issue regulations based on previous NTSB recommendations to establish uniform standards for training and performance. We owe it to the families and friends of the victims of the Flight 3407 to take action to prevent such tragedies in the future.

Earlier this year I joined my colleagues from upstate New York, Christopher Lee and Brian Higgins in introducing the One Level of Safety Act. Our legislation would require regional carriers to meet the same training and safety standards of national carriers.

Additionally, it would require the FAA to implement the unfulfilled NTSB recommendations that were found to be responsible for this crash. I would like to thank Chairman Costello for including a number of these provisions in the Airline Safety and Pilot Training Improvement Act that we are considering today. I am proud to be an original cosponsor of this bill and I urge my colleagues to support it.