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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE,
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WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6125

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September 19, 2025

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Not all senior citizens are created equal. Some 65-year-olds are working 9am to 5pm every day, some are elected to Congress, and others just want to continue their careers as commercial airline pilots but they cannot because Congressional Democrats have said no.

At a time when Joe Biden's White House was being run by autopilot, Democrats in Congress, led by Chuck Schumer, blatantly engaged in age discrimination: they refused to raise the retirement age for commercial pilots from 65 to 67 years old. Democrats had no safety argument, only pointing to "international standards" as a reason to do nothing. Senate Republicans, including then-Senator JD Vance, were united in support of allowing these healthy and smart pilots to fly for two more years. Now that Republicans are in charge, we should end the Schumer-Biden policy that's forcing thousands of highly qualified and experienced pilots into early retirement every year.

Aviation safety is of paramount importance, which is why the most experienced pilots should be permitted to keep working. Regrettably, federal law prevents them from flying commercially. Imagine telling a perfectly healthy, highly qualified pilot he cannot fly anymore all because a bunch of Democrat politicians, many of whom are older than 65 years of age and defended Biden's senility, forced them into retirement.

Next week, the United States will have the opportunity to stand up for smart and healthy pilots and strongly support raising the pilot retirement age at the 42nd General Assembly of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). Remaining silent or neutral and letting foreign countries take the lead is not America First—it's America falling behind.

Numerous foreign countries are already allowing pilots over the age of 65 to fly commercial carriers. That's why Canada, Australia, Brazil, Japan, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom produced a working paper on this topic at an ICAO conference last year, finding the pilot retirement age of 65 to be "arbitrary" and "unnecessary given the evolution of the overall health

and lifespan of the population, advances in medical diagnostics and threats, the rigor of aviation medical assessment, and the ongoing improvements in aviation safety technology.”¹

A Federal report required by the *Fair Treatment of Experienced Pilots Act* [P.L. 110-135] found that “no accidents or incidents resulted from the health conditions of pilots 60 years or older.”² Accident and incident data from both the Federal Aviation Administration and the National Transportation Safety Board show no adverse safety effects attributable to the increase in the age limit for pilots.³ Countless studies have been conducted to corroborate these Federal findings. One study indicated that older, highly experienced pilots maintain better overall flight performance and show less decline over time. Additional data reveals that performance is more closely tied to experience than age.⁴ All of these studies confirm that experienced pilots have fewer accidents than junior pilots.⁵ Flight experience, often associated with age, is significantly correlated with flight safety.

Having an “arbitrary” retirement age is also making air travel more expensive! The International Air Transport Association (IATA) has presented a report finding the “forced curtailment” of flying privileges based on age is limiting the aviation industry’s ability to meet pilot demand.⁶ As you know, in economics, less supply necessarily leads to higher prices.

For these compelling safety and pro-consumer reasons, IATA introduced a measure at this year’s ICAO meeting calling for a worldwide increase in the pilot retirement age to 67.⁷ The measure has received support from Canada, Australia, Brazil, Japan, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. The United States, however, has sadly yet to take a stand.

As one of ICAO’s largest Member States and one of the 36 members of the ICAO Council, America should lead on the international stage in support of raising, or even abolishing, the pilot retirement age. The rules should not be based on arbitrary opinions, unfounded studies, or fictitious narratives. It should be based on truth.

Thousands of experienced pilots are forced to retire every year because of Democrat age discrimination. Republicans can fix this! We have the opportunity at ICAO to advocate on behalf

¹ Int’l Civ. Aviation Org., *Levering Technology and Oversight Activities to Assess Pilot Age Limit*, Working Paper AN-Conf/14-WP/106, 3 (June 28, 2024).

² U.S. Gov’t Accountability Off., *Aviation Safety: Information on the Safety Effects of Modifying the Age Standard for Commercial Pilots*, GAO-10-107R, 2 (Oct. 30, 2009), <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-10-107r>.

³ *Id.* at 3.

⁴ See Guohua Li et al., *Age, Flight Experience, and Risk of Crash Involvement in a Cohort of Professional Pilots*, 157 Am. J. Epidemiology 874 (2003).

⁵ *Id.* at 876.

⁶ *Supra* note 1, at 3.

⁷ Int’l Civ. Aviation Org., *Proposal to Raise the Multi-Pilot Commercial Air Transport Pilot Age Limit*, Working Paper A42-WP/349 (Sept. 28, 2021).

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of aviation safety and our great experienced pilots. You can be their champion by supporting an increase in the mandatory pilot retirement age.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'T. Cruz', is written over a horizontal line.

Ted Cruz
Chairman