

## ALPA Pilot Shortage Misinformation Continues; RAA Corrects the Record

**Washington, DC, December 23, 2022-** In a news release dated December 20, the Air Line Pilots Association (ALPA) [claimed](#) that FAA data indicates an abundance of qualified airline pilots and again accused “airline CEOs” of making profit-driven service cuts and trying to “lower safety requirements for aviation operations.” These accusations are false and the data accompanying them is misleading.

While RAA also reports that ATP and RATP certificates issued and projected through YE 2022 are on pace to match a high mark last seen in 2016, ALPA’s leadership has intentionally decontextualized this data to draw a conclusion that the data does not support. By isolating 2022 ATP and RATP data trends from their normal and expected context, including the known bottleneck and backlog of certificates disrupted by the pandemic, ALPA seeks to deny the true nature of the pilot shortage and its impact to air service and connectivity.

ALPA’s [mission](#) is collective bargaining on behalf of its members and labor scarcity is seen as strengthening that hand. It is long past time for industry and policymakers to call this harmful tactic exactly what it is: **gatekeeping**, which stands as an affront to all who work to build greater equity, diversity and inclusion in aviation careers.

The attached [Issue Brief](#) provides a detailed explanation of what the FAA’s data really tells us, but to summarize:

- ALPA leadership fails to control for or acknowledge a known backlog of disrupted ATP/RATP qualifications from 2020 and 2021 that are now qualifying, which has artificially boosted 2022 numbers. If those backlog certificates are removed from the 2022 figures, the [adjusted](#) 2022 production rate would be **below average**.
- ALPA does not acknowledge that the 2022 monthly ATP/RATP issuance rate has followed a **clear downward trend** since first quarter, evidencing the clearing of a backlog. While the first six months of 2022 produced 100% more than the total ATPs produced in all of 2021, ratings issued November '21 vs '22 were separated by just 6 ratings.
- ALPA claims that the pipelines behind the ATP burst are likewise up, yet they omit mentioning data showing the opposite to be true.
- ALPA fails to mention that the artificial increase in ATP ratings in 2022, which includes the 2020 and 2021 backlogs, is not happening in the other airmen categories that serve as future ATP pipeline indicators, like private and commercial ratings. Far from showing an abundance of pilots, the **data signals a lasting and worsening shortage**. For example, 2022 Multi-engine Commercial ratings, a strong indicator of future supply, are projected to be **just half** of a typical years’ output.
- ALPA [routinely and falsely claims](#) there are 1.5 pilots for every pilot opening. Once again, the data clearly [refutes](#) this claim. Moreover, the number of *qualified* pilots has **declined** month over month. For instance, although 686 ME ATP certificates were issued in November 2022, the actual count of qualified pilots fell by 452 pilots the same month. We've seen this deficit occur multiple times this year.

**ALPA’s current leadership also doesn’t mention the very real impacts of the pilot shortage.**

As anyone who has tried to connect to a smaller community can tell you, the pilot shortage is real, and ALPA's continued denial of the shortage and its associated harms serves no one – including the pilots its leaders serve today and those it will serve tomorrow. Major airlines are drawing unprecedented numbers of pilots from regional airlines, where shortages preceded the pandemic. Regional airlines are turning to a pilot pipeline with far fewer candidates than needed to replace exits let alone allow for the growth needed to meet today's demand. Smaller aircraft have been parked and airports of all sizes have experienced loss in air service this year. Small community service as we once knew it has already changed—and more airports are at risk.

Real people have been harmed by the pilot shortage. These are the would-be travelers who have been disrupted from attending weddings, funerals, business meetings and personal travel. The pilot shortage has also driven more passengers to the highways where [traffic fatalities](#) claimed 42,915 lives in 2021. The pilot shortage has disrupted regional connections to hubs and feed for mainline aircraft, hurting the passengers and employees of our major airline partners by reducing the health of their networks. The pilot shortage has caused [airlines to close their doors](#), displacing thousands of workers in other employee groups from good aviation jobs. Because the pilot shortage from years past is now today's Captain shortage, crew imbalances could slow First Officer hiring despite the overall pilot shortage. First Officers cannot fly without Captains, and the resulting first officer hiring slowdown will ironically prolong and worsen the underlying crisis long-term and newly qualified pilots may wait longer for their start.

Reasonable people can disagree about the best way to resolve the real and growing pilot shortage. It is RAA's expectation that every stakeholder will stand firm in pursuit of the highest level of safety. This includes the importance of evolving pilot training opportunities to enhance, not detract from, aviation safety. However, RAA firmly rejects transparent gatekeeping efforts that mischaracterize proposed improvements to pilot training and career access as anti-safety.

### **A Call to Action.**

As we close 2022, RAA resolves to leave no stone unturned in our quest for real solutions to the pilot shortage in 2023. We issue a call to action: to journalists, we ask you to look at the data behind the soundbites and check it carefully while reporting on the shortage and its deniers. To lawmakers, we urge you to set politics aside and take courageous leadership on the issue. To the Secretary of Transportation, we ask you to take ownership of this issue as the severe, multi-modal transportation crisis it is. And to ALPA, we ask you to come to the table ready to work on solutions that uphold safety and allow the next generation of pilots to take flight.