



# Conversations from the Cockpit

There aren't a lot of certainties in life, but there is one thing I know for sure: it's great to be back in the cockpit. I've already gotten a lot of comments – everything from mergers to negotiations to baseball. And while I disagree with some of the opinions expressed by Cubs fans, most of the chats have been constructive.

The comments I'm hearing in the cockpit are giving me a good appreciation of what's important to you. And one thing that's been a hot topic over the last few weeks is pay protection. Many of you have asked why the company didn't proffer pay protection during the volcanic ash cancellations. A lot of variables went into that decision, but the primary factor you need to know is that pay protection is dictated by the collective bargaining agreement. It's laid out in black and white in the contract and right now, pay protection is guaranteed only if a trip is cancelled because of a marketing decision or directly related to the initiation of a new route.

But that's something the company has proposed changing, recognizing that income stability and schedule predictability are high priorities for pilots. Back in September 2007, AA negotiators offered sequence pay protection for all trip sequences, provided that the loss of flying was beyond the pilot's control. In return, pilots would have to be available for an equivalent number of days in an effort to recover any lost time. This seems like a pretty rational approach to me.

There are other things in AA's scheduling proposal that seem to me to make a lot of sense too, like a daily SEP run instead of a SEP run just once a month, making it easier to pick up open time and modify your schedule. Or, as I talked about in a [previous column](#), a line building system that would put the control of building your schedule in YOUR hands. Is it a perfect proposal? No. But is there any such thing? APA would argue that its pay proposal calling for a 53 percent pay increase is pretty perfect, but to that, I would say sure, the first couple of paychecks would seem pretty nice, but that's something that probably isn't sustainable for long.

Look, there are a lot of details to this proposal – and many others on the table – and I won't try to cover them all right here. But spend some time checking out the resources available to you – your union representatives, [www.AANegotiations.com](http://www.AANegotiations.com) – because I think you'll find there's a lot of goodness on the table. Proposals like the company's scheduling proposal, where everyone gets something, are part of the mutually-beneficial approach we need in order to get something done on this contract.

There's a lot of work ahead of us, but I'm encouraged by the progress that's been made in recent months. We're still having long conversations with the APA on administrative items and the company continues to hope that we can wrap these up. That's why in April's negotiating session, we packaged up many of the remaining administrative items and said, "Let's get these taken care of." That way we can move on to the issues that I am hearing are more important to you – things like pay and work rules and job security.

I can already tell that I've benefited from the feedback I've received out on the line. The other members of the company's negotiating team and I are meeting more regularly with the APA these days, so I'll update my reports as talks continue. In the meantime, don't be reluctant to let the APA know your views on the issues.

Strength and Honor,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John A. Hale". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Captain John Hale  
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