Dear NATCA family,

We have such an accomplished and dedicated staff and membership at NATCA— all working to represent NATCA well. Everything accomplished in 2010 would not have been possible if it weren’t for these individuals working in unity.

2010 found us bringing about change from new bargaining agreements to working groups.

Along with FAA Administrator Randy Babbitt, we vowed to collaborate with the agency and make the National Airspace System even safer. We implemented a collaborative decision making process at 10 test sites, a system which will roll out at facilities nationwide in 2011. This program set up ad hoc teams that helped to work procedural, technological and airspace issues. By committing to collaboration we hope to enhance our quality of life as well as improve operational performance. Only through collaboration will we establish a good foundation with the agency—one that will allow us to better meet our mission of assuring the safety and efficiency of the NAS.

The great relationship we’ve forged with the agency makes it hard to believe that fewer than two years ago we experienced one of the most punitive cultures that employees of the FAA have ever seen. With the rollout of ATSAP nationwide this culture is behind us. In addition to working with the FAA on training methods and tools we have reached an agreement on identifying individuals that did not get their OSI during the white book, due to an OE or OD in order to reimburse them.

With this once hostile relationship in our rear view mirror we had a seemingly insurmountable backlog of grievances and unfair labor practices to wade through—close to half a million. Most of these were a result of how, during the IWR, the FAA ignored all agreements, FLRA rulings, and arbitration awards. When the arbitrators rendered their final and binding decision as part of the Red Book, they also included the Special Grievance Procedure—designed to alleviate the backlog of pending grievances. In 2010 all the Green Book and national IWR grievances were determined.

Another wrong righted was the return to the table with a fair process for the Multi-Units. They were the first imposed on in 2005. Now with a fair impasse process in place, the parties have memorialized it for term bargaining that will cover all bargaining units through 2017. During 2010, the staff specialist’s collective bargaining agreement was also completed.

These victories and accomplishments are only the tip of the iceberg. 2010 also saw the establishment of a joint workgroup with the FAA to reevaluate realignment proposals (which saw the termination of ESEP), a commitment made to technology engagement through participation of the front line workforce, and a bigger international presence through our improved relationships with IFATCA and its members. In addition we also improved benefits for our membership by implementing a revised basic rep training class and overhauling both our public and members-only websites.

It was our privilege to work with all of you, to serve the men and women of NATCA. We understand the sacrifice that union activism takes. Thank you to everyone—whether you pledged PAC dollars, came to NATCA in Washington or Communicating for Safety, improved relationships with management at your facility or held a NATCA Reloaded event, the victories of 2010 could not have occurred without each and every one of you.

Paul Rinaldi, President

Trish Gilbert, Executive Vice President
In late 2009 the National Realignment Committee was formed, chaired by MIA controller Mitch Herrick. In January 2010 NATCA took a new approach to combating the FAA’s plan to realign several facilities across the U.S. Senior Communications Representative Alex Caldwell embarked on a six-week campaign across Ohio, Michigan, Illinois and Texas to meet with general aviation pilots, as well as other local users, and let them know about the ATC services they stood to lose if the FAA’s plan, without involving stakeholders, went through. With invaluable help from facility representatives, Caldwell held over 40 meetings at more than 30 airports across the four states regarding the realignment proposals in Dayton, Toledo, Canton, Mansfield and Youngstown in Ohio; Muskegon, Lansing and Grand Rapids in Michigan; Abilene, Texas and Champaign, Illinois.

While the realignment road show was going on – as well as before it even started – Mark Griffin of Boise Tower and TRACON was working with Boise’s Mayor Bieter on stopping the FAA from moving Boise’s TRACON services to Salt Lake TRACON. Another perfect example of how third party support made a difference in the outcome of realignment projects, Griffin continues to be involved in the collaborative process after both the mayor and the Idaho congressional delegation helped him, and other NATCAvists at BOI, to stop the relocation.
In addition to meeting with users at the airports that were home to the air traffic control facilities being altered, a presentation was given (designed by Senior Legislative Representative Frank McCarthy) at the major satellite airports of each facility regarding NATCA’s concerns and why the user community should be concerned. The goal was to inspire as many people as possible to write letters to their government representatives and the FAA, asking for a say in the realignment process. NATCA’s position from the beginning of the realignment tour was that modernization needed to happen but that it couldn’t happen safely without the input of the people–the air traffic controllers and pilots–who used it most.

The website www.localairportsmatter.com was created for the cause and, by encouraging those in attendance to use the site as their vehicle to contact decision-makers, more than 900 letters to Congress were written and sent. The tour also garnered amazing media coverage with more than 35 print articles, 17 television news spots and countless letters to the editor–in addition to piquing the interest of government officials.

The pressure put on the FAA worked and, with the exception of Dayton–which was too far along in the realignment process to be stopped, NATCA is now working with the FAA after finally being given the opportunity to collaborate through working groups.
Building upon the momentum from a highly successful safety conference last year, NATCA’s Communicating for Safety conference (CFS), held in Orlando in March, featured record attendance – over 600 – and a jam-packed agenda of safety issues that were explored and discussed, from human factors to runway safety and modernization.

By all accounts, the two-day event achieved NATCA’s goals of elevating the stature of its premier annual safety conference within the controller, pilot and aviation communities as well as educating the membership on the top safety issues it currently faces.

The event drew 400 NATCA members as well as 200 aviation industry professionals and students.

“CFS 2010 was a huge success with a record number of NATCA members and other safety professionals in attendance,” said Safety Committee Chairman Steve Hansen. “NATCA’s continued support, and drive to continually improve the conference has made CFS one of the premier safety conferences in the country.”

CFS hosted a wide variety of speakers and panels, with highlights including panels on human factors and NextGen, the Air Traffic Safety Action Program (ATSAP), runway safety and safety management systems. The first day also featured an in-depth discussion between top NATCA and FAA officials entitled, “Collaboration Under a New Administration.” It included NATCA President Paul Rinaldi, NATCA Executive Vice President Trish Gilbert, then-FAA Acting Deputy Administrator J. David Grizzle and FAA Air Traffic Organization Chief Operating Officer Hank Krakowski.

The conference also featured speakers including Captain Robert Bragg, the Pan Am First Officer in the 1977 accident in Tenerife, which remains the deadliest accident in aviation history, and also NTSB Chairman Deborah Hersman. In addition, Professor Nancy Leveson from Massachusetts Institute of Technology, spoke about the relationship between human factors and NextGen, providing insight into what the impact of all the new technology will have on controllers that have to interface with it.
On March 22, 2010 the sixth annual Archie League Medal of Safety Awards were presented during a formal banquet at Communicating for Safety in Orlando, honoring a total of 15 controllers for their extraordinary efforts during the 2009 calendar year.

Named for the first air traffic controller, the awards program recognizes members each year whose actions are the very best examples of skill and dedication in the pursuit of a safe outcome in emergency situations. And, in what turned out to be NATCA’s most successful Archie League Awards to date, the year’s winners demonstrated exactly this, proving above and beyond in both capability and professionalism during the year’s most amazing flight assists.

From bird strikes to pilot confusion, the winning selection of regional saves showed it all. Ultimately, the honor of best flight assist went to six South Florida controllers who helped passenger Doug White successfully land a private plane, with his entire family onboard, after the pilot suffered a heart attack and died shortly after. Through a surprise special award, these six presidential award winners personally thanked White for his courage and contribution, and the evening concluded as guests were left speechless with Mr. White’s touching recap of the life-changing event that, as he himself put it, “neither controller nor passengers could ever train for.”

For a full listing of winners, as well as all associated materials, please visit: http://www.natca.org/cfs.aspx?zone=Communicating%20For%20Safety&pID=302#p302
NATCA in Washington has emerged as one of the union’s most important events. In 2010, it afforded attending members an opportunity to educate their elected representatives in Congress about important aviation safety matters and how the advancement of the ATC profession and the needs of the aviation community can be addressed through sound public policy and legislation.

Over 350 NATCA activists visited nearly every member of Congress and spoke to them about issues central to our union. NIW was an impressive grassroots lobbying effort, and its success was the culmination of many months of behind-the-scenes teamwork from both the Government Affairs Department and the National Legislative Committee.

Jane Garvey, the first FAA administrator to speak at NATCA in Washington back in 2001, made her second appearance in 2010 to accept NATCA’s Sentinel of Safety Award. Garvey, in her keynote speech, stressed the importance of collaboration in moving forward, saying, “Collaboration isn’t just a management style, consensus isn’t just something to strive for. In aviation, they are essential elements in any real plan for progress.”

One of the highlights of the event was an impassioned and emotional speech by Chairman Jim Oberstar, D–Minn. At one point, he clutched a copy of the NATCA/FAA red book contract that NATCA gave him before he took the podium and said, “Giving this to me is like giving me dad back.” Oberstar reflected on his own union heritage through his father’s involvement with the steelworkers’ union and how that affected both his childhood and how he conducts himself as an adult and legislator.

The success of the grassroots effort became clear as Government Affairs staff conducted follow up meetings with Members of Congress. In office after office, legislators and Congressional staff who had met with our activists were well informed on our issues and many reported contacting their leadership with the message brought by NATCA activists.
NATCA’s 13th biennial convention in Honolulu was about “ohana” – family – with a record number of attendees, including nearly half who were guests.

The union’s new generation was able to spend time getting to know many of NATCA’s previous leaders, as nearly all former presidents and EVPs were in attendance. “The experience, skill and vision of our past leaders have assisted us in moving into the future as a force among the labor world,” EVP Trish Gilbert said.

Additionally, the convention focused heavily on labor history up to and including PATCO. In many ways, this was a transitional convention; a time to reflect and a time to look forward. “It was vital for us to focus the attendees on the importance of learning from the past so we can build for the future,” NATCA President Paul Rinaldi said. “We need our newest brothers and sisters to understand why this family is so special and why we need them to carry us forward. And we also hoped to encourage those activists with decades of experience to take the education, experience and solidarity back to the membership in their facilities.”

There was robust and passionate debate as the delegates dealt with the business before the convention body, representing their facility membership, and ultimately voting on the issues at hand. The membership was well served by the professional manner in which the delegates handled the business on their behalf. There was a record two roll-call votes. The first was on changing the number of delegates each local is entitled and the second was on the deletion of Section 3 of the seniority policy. Each item was a constitutional amendment, requiring a two-thirds majority for passage. Both votes failed.

Executive Director Barry Krasner led the convention as its chairman, as appointed by Rinaldi.
AA Administrator Randy Babbitt and NATCA President Paul Rinaldi have demonstrated a commitment to collaboration and partnership between the FAA and NATCA, that resulted in 2010 being a busy yet productive year for NATCA’s Safety and Technology department. The year found NATCA selecting more than 250 representative positions, including one Washington, D.C.-based representative for NextGen, and starting new collaborative projects with the Agency including ATSAP and Partnership for Safety. NATCA has several members serving as national representatives, including:

- Melvin Davis (SoCal TRACON) – NextGen representative
- Jim Davis (Potomac TRACON) – Airspace representative
- Rick Heckman (Philadelphia TRACON) – ADS-B representative

The agency began working on its Optimization of Airspace and Procedures in the Metroplex (OAPM). NATCA’s representatives in this effort include:

- Dee Daniel (Potomac TRACON)
- Chad Geyer (Los Angeles Center)
- Mark McKelligan (Boston Center)

NATCA also has 14 members working on ATSAP (Air Traffic Safety Action Program) that includes other industry experts examining data provided by FAA ASIAS (Aviation Safety and Information Analysis System).

In addition to ATSAP, Steve Hansen, NATCA Safety Committee Chair and Albuquerque Center controller, has been meeting with the Agency on the Partnership for Safety program. Progress has been slow on the Agency’s side; it is our hope that this initiative can get moving again. NATCA has been working to improve the Crew Resource Management (CRM) training for more than three years. Dale Wright and Steve Hansen attended CRM training at Chicago TRACON in Oct. 2010 to observe the training. Based on these observations, NATCA presented the FAA with a plan to improve controller training dealing with CRM. Mike Blake of Boston Center, as well as Dale Wright and Steve Hansen, continue to work on this issue with the Agency.

The largest air traffic control undertaking in history has been ERAM and NATCA has been very involved from the start. Over 50 members are now working as representatives on various ERAM activities, including:

- Jim Swatek of Albuquerque Center – ERAM Technical Lead
- Julio Henriques of New York Center – ERAM Labor Issues
- Bev Cook of Washington Center – ERAM Evaluation Lead
- Aaron Fishman of Oakland Center – ERAM Training Lead

Nationally, the Safety and Technology department has been very involved in the Runway Safety program. Dale Wright served as the industry co-lead for the Runway Safety Council. In addition, Ric Loewen of Dallas–Fort Worth Tower is serving as NATCA’s national representative to the Runway Safety Action Team, a program that every local should be involved. Due largely to the council’s work, serious runway incursions have dropped from 24 in 2008 to only six in 2010.

With the target date for ADS-B in the NAS (National Airspace System) being 2013, there is still time to address the concern regarding ADS-B only having to mirror current radar coverage. NATCA has seen a tremendous amount of participation from Louisville, Philadelphia and Houston Center on ADS-B locally and hope to see participation at more locals in 2011.

Also in 2011, members should see great dividends from the RNAV/RNP initiative, led by national representatives Dennis Kelly of Philadelphia Tower (RNAV Off The Ground representative) and Jim Davis of Potomac TRACON (working on RNAV arrivals and RNP). By the end of 2010, Southwest Airlines had already begun its RNP initiative at 21 airports.
In addition to new projects, the Safety and Technology department continued its work on ongoing programs and committees, including NTSB, OSHA and IFATCA. Bill Shea, of Dallas–Fort Worth TRACON, continued to serve as NATCA’s Air Safety Investigator (ASI) committee chairman and his assistance proved valuable as the NTSB began to focus more on controller performance and professionalism in 2010, after the Hudson River mid-air incident in 2009.

Mike Odryna, of Boston Center, continues to serve as NATCA’s national chair of the OSHA committee. A major issue – and one that will continue to be addressed in 2011 by Odryna – was the lack of concern being given by the FAA to employee safety. Another ongoing issue in 2010 was the many instances of mold in the system, with Detroit Tower being the most documented case. The situation caused many Detroit controllers to become ill due to mold exposure.

NATCA’s representative to the IFATCA Technical Operations committee (the IFATCA safety committee) is Bill Holtzman of Washington Center. This position allows NATCA the opportunity to exchange information with controllers from other countries in order to improve technology and safety products. NATCA member Dr. Ruth Stilwell, from Miami Center, is the IFATCA Observer to the ICAO Air Navigation Commission (ANC). Dr Stilwell is able to give the union the opportunity to be more proactive on international air traffic control issues.

2010 was a busy year in the safety and technology arena, largely due to the commitment made by both the FAA–NATCA collaboration and the membership’s overwhelming positive response to the initiative. We thank everyone who represented NATCA this year on the myriad of safety and technology issues worked and we encourage all members to be involved in 2011.

As the department continues to work safety issues in 2011, we also urge the utilization of the NATCA safety hotline (1.800.266.0895 ext. 72331), where members may report issues, both on the phone and online at natcamembers.org. This process maintains the issues in the departmental database and allows the department to address trends as well.
The Communications Department faced new challenges both in its pursuit of external media coverage and its publication of internal communications. With a commitment made to collaboration on the part of both FAA Administrator Randy Babbitt and NATCA President Paul Rinaldi, 2010 didn’t find us battling the FAA in the press but instead working together to gain positive coverage.

That is not to say that NATCA wasn’t in the press. Our top hits included coverage on the ongoing staffing crisis at N90 and SCT and coverage from the Archie League Awards, where the President’s Award winners – controllers from ZMA and RSW who rescued Doug White and his family on Easter Sunday in 2009 – were interviewed everywhere from an in-depth interview on the Mike Huckabee Show to other national television stories on the NBC Today Show and Fox News.

Rinaldi and Executive Vice President Trish Gilbert also did their fair share of media interviews – from calling for FAA Reauthorization to explaining ERAM and promoting the work ATC does during the holiday season.

None of this kept us from communicating internally. Our staff logged countless hours as we debuted a new design for the newsletter, The Air Traffic Controller, developed a new website for Region X and spread the word regarding the membership survey. The biggest undertaking for 2010 however, was the debut of not just a new website for the membership but the debut of a new public website as well – where we offer resources to the public and streamlined information for our membership.

From press releases and the NATCA Insider to media training, calendars and the Archie League Awards, 2010 continued the trend of each year being busier than the one before – and set us on pace for going above and beyond in 2011 as well.
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