

Your Flight Is Delayed; Thank the Feds

Planning to fly this summer? Good luck.

Delays are up. Cancellations, too.

Why? Because of the pilot shortage.

A pilot shortage? How can this be? Flying is a popular job. Some people fly small planes just for fun. Why aren't there enough commercial pilots?

Because the government passed another dumb law.

In 2009, after a Colgan Air crash near Buffalo, New York, killed 50 people, Congress decided that airlines could only hire aspiring commercial pilots who already had lots of flight time.

Instead of 250 hours, now they have to have 1,500 hours!

"That never made any sense," says current commercial airline pilot Tracy Price in my new video.

The sixfold increase wouldn't have prevented the Colgan crash. Those pilots had many more than 1,500 hours of flight time. The pilot had 3,379—the co-pilot, 2,244.

That didn't matter to the politicians. "We need to improve pilot training, address flight crew hours and service," said then-Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D-N.J.).

Demanding more pre-hire flight time discouraged people from trying to become pilots. It had "the effect of pulling up the ladder," says Price.

Few people have the time or money to get 1,500 hours in the air before they can even apply for a job. The number of certified pilots fell even as flight demand increased.

The pilots unions didn't object.

"Fewer applicants means higher pay," explains Price.

I say to Price, "This rule is good for you!"

"Great for me [and other] professional pilots," he replies. "If you believe in freedom though, it's a bit of an issue."

The union blamed the pilot shortage on poor pay at regional airlines, so I push back at

Price: "Some of these regional airlines were paying pilots as little as \$21,000 a year."

"[But] there was no shortage of applicants!" Price responds. "Plenty of people were willing to take fairly low pay and live with roommates for a year or two to gain that really valuable jet experience."

Today's required 1,500 hours doesn't even create better pilots. Actual pilots get trained in simulators today. The computerized cockpit gives them more useful experience than unsupervised hours of hobby flying.

In fact, those hours may leave pilots *less* prepared. "Flight time does not equal experience," Faye Black of the Regional Airline Association told Congress. "We waste a lot of time in training, breaking bad habits pilots acquire while trying to quickly get to 1,500 hours."

The politicians ignored her.

That's not surprising. Once government creates new rules, those rules tend to live forever.

Many are just unnecessary. Airlines don't want to kill their customers, and pilots don't want to kill themselves, so they self-regulate.

The last fatal commercial airline crash was 13 years ago. Flying is much safer than driving, biking, and taking a bus or train.

"Safer than any mode of conveyance ever, including walking," says Price.

But politicians believe that if they're not passing *more* rules, they're not doing their job.

So expect more flight delays this summer.