

In a quintessential American story, 15-year-old Joseph Dager came to America from Lebanon in 1903 without knowing a word of English. Eleven years later he started his ice cream business in the basement of a local confectionary. His hand-cranked ice cream batches set his family and Central Ohio on a path that would make Velvet Ice Cream and Central Ohio famous.

Although they no longer hand-crank ice cream in a basement, the company strives to maintain its connection to those by-gone years. In homage to Velvet's adherence to old time values and tradition, Velvet is now housed in a refurbished grist mill from the 1800s. The "Ye Olde Mill" now manufactures ice cream, plays host to thousands of visitors and marks the center of activity during each annual Utica Sertoma Ice Cream Festival.

Thousands stream into Utica each year for the festival. Having attended many myself, I know the joy locals and outsiders alike find in a bowl of good, old-fashioned ice cream. In a way, the festival commemorates the simple beginnings of a business started by an immigrant named Joseph Dager. Like so many other enterprises, Velvet Ice Cream started humbly but grew into a Central Ohio institution. America is richer for Velvet's founder's contributions to our country and Central Ohioans are grateful he chose to settle here.

As the fourth generation of the Dager family carries Joseph Dager's legacy into its 2nd century, Central Ohio proudly celebrates one man's vision, hard work and sweet legacy.

HONORING DANIEL PUGH

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 1, 2014

Mr. GRAVES of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Daniel Pugh. Danny is a very special young man who has exemplified the finest qualities of citizenship and leadership by taking an active part in the Boy Scouts of America, Troop 177, and earning the most prestigious award of Eagle Scout.

Danny has been very active with his troop, participating in many scout activities. Over the many years Danny has been involved with scouting, he has not only earned numerous merit badges, but also the respect of his family, peers, and community. Most notably, Danny has contributed to his community through his Eagle Scout project. Danny cleaned and cleared a city lot near the town square in Bowling Green, Missouri, that had been abandoned for a decade.

Mr. Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in commending Daniel Pugh for his accomplishments with the Boy Scouts of America and for his efforts put forth in achieving the highest distinction of Eagle Scout.

IN RECOGNITION OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL MICHAEL FERRITER

HON. SANFORD D. BISHOP, JR.

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 1, 2014

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Lieutenant General Mi-

chael Ferriter, Assistant Chief of Staff for Installation Management and Commanding General, Installation Management Command, for his distinguished service to the United States of America. Lieutenant General Ferriter will be retiring from the United States Army after nearly 35 years of service. He will be honored at a retirement ceremony on Friday, May 2, 2014 at 10:00 a.m. at McGinnis-Wickham Hall at Fort Benning, Georgia.

LTG Ferriter graduated from The Citadel in Charleston, South Carolina in May 1979, and was commissioned in the Infantry as a Second Lieutenant. After the Infantry Officer Basic Course, his first troop assignment was Platoon Leader, 2nd Battalion, 16th Infantry, Fort Riley, Kansas. From there, he successfully completed numerous command and staff assignments at Fort Wainwright, Alaska; Fort Lewis, Washington; Fort Benning, Georgia; and Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

LTG Ferriter's first Joint Staff assignment was as Deputy Director for Operations and Plans before he became Executive Assistant to the Commander of the United States Joint Forces Command. In June 2004, he was called to duty as Assistant Division Commander of Operations of the 82d Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. He completed a combat tour in Operation Restore Hope in Somalia with the 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment; two tours in Iraq as Deputy Commanding General (Operations), Multi-National Corps, Iraq; and one tour as Deputy Commanding General (Advising and Training), United States Forces—Iraq.

The Second Congressional District of Georgia gained a respected and compassionate leader when LTG Ferriter was appointed Commanding General of the United States Army Infantry Center and the Maneuver Center of Excellence at Fort Benning. He became a close friend and confidant as he served in my district and when he was appointed Assistant Chief of Staff for Installation Management and Commanding General, Installation Management Command, he demonstrated tremendous support for the Congressional Military Family Caucus, which I co-chair with Congresswoman Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA). LTG Ferriter and Mrs. Ferriter graciously participated in the CMFC's annual Military Family Summit held at Fort Benning in 2012, demonstrating strong support for our nation's military families.

LTG Ferriter's service to his country is but a small testament of the high caliber of character that he embodies. As the head of a family heavily involved in the military, he recognizes the challenges that face service members, veterans and military families across the nation. Throughout his tenure, he has worked tirelessly to find and implement solutions to these challenges.

LTG Ferriter has certainly excelled in all areas of life, but none of this would be possible without the love and support of his wife, Margie Ferriter. LTG Ferriter's motivation also comes from being a role model to his four children Dr. Meghan Ferriter, MAJ Dan Ferriter, CPT Paddy Ferriter, and former CPT Mary Whitney Whittaker. Mary Whitney and her husband, Garret, are the proud parents of Parker, LTG Ferriter's and Margie's first grandchild.

Mr. Speaker, today I ask my colleagues to join me, my wife, Vivian, the nearly 700,000 people in Georgia's 2nd Congressional District, and all Americans, in extending our sin-

cerest appreciation and best wishes to Lieutenant General Michael Ferriter, a "Soldier's Soldier," and Mrs. Ferriter, upon the occasion of his retirement from a stellar career of 35 years in the United States Army.

RECOMMENDATION TO REJECT NORWEGIAN AIR INTERNATIONAL'S APPLICATION FOR A FOREIGN AIR OPERATORS CERTIFICATE

HON. RICHARD M. NOLAN

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 1, 2014

Mr. NOLAN. Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw the attention of my colleagues concerned about our nation's aviation industry and the delicate balance in our international relations to the pending decision by U.S. Secretary of Transportation Anthony Foxx regarding the application of Norwegian Air International for a Foreign Air Operators Certificate.

This important issue was addressed with utmost clarity recently by my friend, former U.S. Congressman Jim Oberstar in the following letter to Secretary Foxx. Jim Oberstar served in the U.S. House from 1975 to 2011 and was for many years Chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. He is known as the nation's leading expert on Domestic and International Transportation issues. Former Congressman Oberstar urges Secretary Foxx to reject the Norwegian Air International Application.

APRIL 28, 2014.

Hon. ANTHONY FOXX,
Secretary, U.S. Department of Transportation,
New Jersey Avenue SE., Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SECRETARY: I have watched with great interest the public debate over the application of Norwegian Air International (NAI) for a foreign air operator's certificate from the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT). As a former chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, it is my strongly held view that the approval of NAI's application would run contrary to the U.S.-EU Air Transport Agreement and the labor article embodied in the agreement, and contrary to the best interests of U. S. commercial aviation. I respectfully urge you to reject NAI's application.

During my 36 years of service in the U.S. House of Representatives on the committee of jurisdiction over international aviation trade issues, I witnessed dramatic changes in the U.S. and global airline industries. Beginning with deregulation in 1978 and continuing through the modern era of mergers, code sharing, anti-trust-immunized alliances, and expansive Open Skies agreements, much of the airline industry today is globally interconnected; U.S. airlines and their employees are directly impacted by the actions of foreign competitors more than ever before. During my tenure of watchfulness over the U.S. aviation industry, I sought to ensure that liberalization was pursued in bilateral agreements which assured a balance of benefits with our international trade partners, protecting the integrity, safety, and competitiveness of the U.S. aviation system.

In the early 1990s, the U.S. government began negotiating bilateral Air Transport, or Open Skies agreements that were intended to open aviation markets, promote competition and tourism, create jobs and increase consumer choice for international travel. These Open Skies agreements are qualitatively different from other trade agreements which deal with services in that they

are almost exclusively bilateral. As such, they reflect a balance of benefits for the U.S. and our trade partner, often with in-country and beyond operating rights, and they are overseen by the Departments of State, Transportation, and Justice, rather than the United States Trade Representative. Given the complexity and size of the U.S. aviation market—which accounts for over half of the world's aviation marketplace—retention of this model is necessary to ensure that the exchange in air traffic rights is done in a way that promotes strong safety, labor and working condition standards, while also ensuring an equitable competitive environment for U.S. airlines. Critical to achieving this goal has long been the continued enforcement of U.S. foreign ownership and control and cabotage laws, along with strong U.S. DOT and DOJ regulatory oversight.

The negotiation of the U.S.-EU Open Skies agreement, which began in the middle of the last decade, presented many unique challenges. While the European Union is an economic and political union of 28 member states, each of these states has retained its respective governmental aviation regulatory authority. Therefore, rather than dealing with a single aviation regulatory body and one set of labor and social laws as we had with previous agreements, we were dealing with multiple aviation regulatory authorities and sets of labor and social laws. While there are base standards for safety and labor laws, the individual nation-state laws still differ widely.

Given the unique nature of negotiating with the EU, many of my colleagues and I were concerned about proposed changes in regulatory structure that would allow any EU airline to operate from any point in the EU to any point in the U.S. and to establish subsidiaries in other EU states. Despite this “European status” for operating and corporate rights, there was no EU-wide law that governed key labor-management relations aspects of these airlines. Instead, these aspects—such as selection of bargaining representatives and contract negotiations—were, and continue to be, subject to the national labor laws of the respective European countries.

During the negotiations, EU representatives expressed concern that such an arrangement could lead to “forum shopping” where European airlines would seek to operate out of countries with less robust labor and social laws. This could allow airlines to seek the lowest common denominator in terms of labor and regulatory standards thereby lowering their own operating costs but driving down standards throughout the EU. In other words, the EU was concerned that new airlines could be launched using a NAI-like business model.

This concern led negotiators to include in the agreement Article 17 bis (“Social Dimension”), which states that “the opportunities created by the Agreement are not intended to undermine labour standards or the labour-related rights and principles contained in the Parties’ respective laws.” It further states that “the principles in paragraph 1 shall guide the Parties as they implement the Agreement.” The fact that there was no equivalent to Article 17 bis in any of the previous Open Skies agreements with EU member states is a direct acknowledgement of the challenges posed by the regulatory and legal arrangement within the EU.

Article 17 bis was a critical factor in the “Agreement”. I applauded its inclusion as an important and necessary step in protecting against the use of market-opening aviation trade agreements to lower labor standards throughout the transatlantic aviation market: the largest aviation trade market in the world.

Today, in light of NAI's application for a foreign air operator's certificate, as well as the plethora of public comments that the DOT has received on this application, I believe that the inclusion of Article 17 bis and the concerns that led to its inclusion were particularly prescient.

Mr. Secretary, you and the DOT International policy staff are familiar with the details of NAI's application and business model, but key facts are worth repeating: NAI is a subsidiary of Norwegian Air Shuttle (NAS), a low-cost European carrier based out of Norway. When Norway became a signatory of the U.S.-EU Open Skies Agreement in 2011, NAS was afforded the same access to air traffic rights under that agreement as other EU carriers. Rather than expand its operations with its existing corporate structure, its workforce and collective bargaining agreements, NAS created NAI and proceeded to register its long-haul aircraft in Ireland and obtain an Irish Air Operator's Certificate—effectively becoming an Irish airline despite the fact that it has no announced plans to operate in Ireland.

This move allowed NAS to expand its long-haul operations through NAI, but also to escape Norway's social laws and to evade existing collective bargaining agreements with its Norwegian pilots and flight attendants. For example, NAI's pilots are based in Thailand and employed under individual employment contracts that are covered by the laws of Singapore. These pilots are then contracted to NAI. The individual employment contracts prevent collective bargaining, and allow NAI to drastically reduce labor costs and gain an unfair competitive advantage over U.S. and European carriers who currently operate in the transatlantic market. The workforce arrangement for flight attendants is still evolving, but what I have learned is that NAI is hiring and basing its cabin crewmembers outside of its home country in what is clearly a plan to secure substandard wages and working conditions and to blatantly evade its collective bargaining obligations in Norway. NAI is pursuing, quite simply, what in maritime law is called a “Flag of Convenience” strategy.

NAI has not denied that it registered in Ireland to avoid the application of Norwegian labor laws to its crews. Other economic justifications presented for selecting Ireland over other possible places to incorporate, the validity of which also have been effectively rebutted by several opponents, appear to be intended to distract from this central and undisputed motivation. The company is thus taking advantage of the opportunities provided by the U.S.-EU Open Skies Agreement in order to lower its own labor costs and undercut the competition, the very scenario that EU negotiators feared when Article 17 bis was included in the U.S.-EU agreement.

I believe that the evidence and arguments submitted in the public docket provide the Department with ample justification to deny the application.

During my years of service on the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, conducting vigorous oversight of international aviation trade, I learned that liberalization and market expansion could provide numerous benefits to consumers, open business opportunities for U.S. carriers and create jobs. But I also observed that effective market expansion required the thoughtful and careful approach of balancing reduced trade barriers with the assurance of fair competition and the public interest. We understand the strategic and economic significance of the U.S. airline industry to our nation's well-being, and further understand the unique challenges inherent in implementing the expansive and complicated U.S.-

EU Open Skies Agreement in a productive and responsible manner.

With this background, I believe that this is an important inflection point for how we as a nation project and secure America's role in the global aviation marketplace. The negotiators for both sides in the U.S.-EU Open Skies Agreement negotiations understood the risks and adverse consequences that irresponsible liberalization could pose to the airline industries and workforces on both sides of the Atlantic. They resisted deliberate efforts to dismantle the U.S. ownership and control and cabotage laws, and they included, for the first time ever, a labor article in the final agreement. In doing so, they made an unmistakable statement that the terms of competition must not be set by those who would seek to gain an unfair advantage at the expense of quality jobs and high labor standards.

The Department should implement the Agreement in the spirit of Article 17 bis and concern for both fair competition and balanced trade benefits. Were NAI to be allowed to operate as proposed, the dynamic of transatlantic aviation competition will be changed for the worse, creating a situation where Flags of Convenience become the norm, not the exception.

I urge you to reject the NAT application, and thereby uphold the spirit and intent of the U.S.-EU Open Skies Agreement and Article 17 bis. Thank you for your consideration of my views on this vital international aviation policy issue.

Sincerely,

JIM OBERSTAR, M.C.

OUR UNCONSCIONABLE NATIONAL DEBT

HON. MIKE COFFMAN

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 1, 2014

Mr. COFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, on January 20, 2009, the day President Obama took office, the national debt was \$10,626,877,048,913.08.

Today, it is \$17,447,321,527,551.15. We've added \$6,820,444,478,638.07 to our debt in 5 years. This is over \$6.8 trillion in debt our nation, our economy, and our children could have avoided with a balanced budget amendment.

HONORING CARMEN VELASQUEZ OF CHICAGO FOR HER LIFETIME OF SERVICE TO THE UNDERSERVED LATINO COMMUNITY IN CHICAGO

HON. RAUL RUIZ

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 1, 2014

Mr. RUIZ. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize a dear friend of mine, Carmen Velasquez of Chicago as she retires from her position of executive director at Alivio Medical Center, for her incredible dedication to the medical community and the underserved Latino community of Chicago.

Carmen devoted her life to the care of others in her community, advocating for health, education, civil rights, and equitable health access for all in Chicago. As founder of the