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Jason Call For Congress
PO Box 1887
Marysville, WA 98270

Representative Rick Larsen must be held accountable for failed oversight of Boeing

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The newly reopened investigation into the Federal Aviation Administration's oversight failures of the Boeing 737 MAX is set to be led by a member of Congress who, while being financially backed by Boeing, enabled the culture of shortcuts that led to two crashes and the deaths of 349 people.

Representative Rick Larsen, chair of the House Aviation Subcommittee, ascended to ranking member in 2013 committing to "making sure the FAA streamlines its testing and safety certification process for new technology and equipment."^[1] During Congressional investigations into battery fires on-board the new Boeing 787 in 2013, Rep. Larsen acknowledged problems in FAA's safety certification process,^[2] yet he pushed for no substantive changes at FAA to address it.

"[O]ver the past two months to solve problems with the new 787 Dreamliner's fire-plagued batteries, one player has been strangely silent: Congress," reported the Associated Press in March 2013, "The unusual bipartisan silence reflects Boeing's political clout, wielded by legions of lobbyists, fueled by hefty political campaign contributions."^[3] This behavior by Boeing continued undeterred and unaddressed by Rep. Larsen during his time as ranking member on the House Aviation Subcommittee.

Over the next five years until the first 737 MAX crash, Rep. Larsen received \$26,000 in contributions from Boeing's political action committee.

"The accountability for these crashes is not only with the FAA, but with the failed oversight of the FAA by the House Aviation Subcommittee," said Jason Call, a progressive Democrat challenging Rep. Larsen in the August 2, 2022 primary for Washington's Second Congressional District. "The subcommittee knew of problems with the FAA's Organization Designation Authorization program as far back as 2012. The problems they now seek to investigate further should have been looked into a decade ago."

These renewed investigations into the 737 MAX crashes must also focus on the lawmakers who themselves failed in their oversight duties. In a report issued by the FAA, it was revealed that no disciplinary action was taken against Boeing employees responsible for certifying the safety of key technologies that were behind both crashes.[\[4\]](#) This despite findings that those same employees were directly pressured by management to overlook safety concerns.[\[5\]](#)

"The pressure that Boeing has exerted on the FAA to authorize failed components is the same pressure they exert on members of Congress like Rick Larsen to look the other way: through huge campaign contributions," said Call, "This 'fox guarding the henhouse' routine of Congressional oversight is never in the public interest,[\[6\]](#) and in the case of the Boeing 737 MAX program, it was disastrous. It could have been avoided."

Jason Call does not accept any campaign contributions from a corporate political action committee. He believes that the inherent conflict of interest between members of Congress responsible for overseeing industries and campaign contributions from those same industries should be eliminated.

Rep. Larsen's acceptance of industry cash while he decided against bold action against corporate giants like Boeing demonstrates a severe lack of leadership in the public's interest. Call believes that this record of putting profits before people is not befitting a member of Congress who is seeking to lead the House Transportation and Infrastructure committee.

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**Please direct questions or inquiries to Ben Karpelman, Press
Director: press@callforcongress.com**