



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Hearing Statement of Transportation and Maritime Security Subcommittee Chairman Lou Correa (D-CA)

One Year Later: Implementation of the TSA Modernization Act

October 29, 2019

One year ago this month, Congress enacted the first comprehensive reauthorization of TSA, known as the “TSA Modernization Act.” The Act incorporated a substantial number of bills and provisions that originated in this Committee. It stands as a testament to the Committee’s longstanding bipartisan efforts to conduct oversight of TSA. I thank my colleagues Ms. Watson Coleman and Mr. Katko for their leadership in advancing legislation last Congress, and I am glad to carry on those efforts with Ranking Member Lesko this Congress. The TSA Modernization Act enhances and improves our nation’s transportation security. The Act is too comprehensive to describe in detail in the few minutes I have here, but I’d like to highlight a few key provisions.

First, the Act established a five-year term for the TSA Administrator in an attempt to provide stability to the agency’s leadership. Unfortunately, the current chaos and leadership vacancies within DHS have undermined those efforts. Administrator Pecoske has been forced to “wear two hats,” acting as both TSA Administrator and DHS Deputy Secretary. I commend the Administrator for answering the call to duty, but the role of TSA Administrator is a full-time job that requires full-time dedication to ensuring the security of our transportation systems.

I hope President Trump will nominate permanent leaders to fill the many DHS vacancies he has created, and thus provide TSA with the stable leadership Congress envisioned when we passed this bill. In addition to establishing the Administrator’s term, the TSA Modernization Act pushes TSA to enhance its strategic planning efforts, secure public areas of airports and surface transportation systems, and improve the security of air cargo transportation. We appreciate TSA’s dedication to implementing the many directives and reporting requirements in this bill, as well as TSA’s transparency in updating the Committee on its progress. However, though TSA has made significant progress on implementation overall, I am concerned that TSA has not yet complied with provisions that represent some of the Committee’s biggest priorities in the Act.

First, TSA is late in providing this Committee a report on recommendations to reform its personnel management system. As you know, this Subcommittee recently highlighted issues facing the TSA workforce at a hearing in May. Transportation Security Officers serve on the front lines securing our nation’s transportation systems, yet are among the lowest-paid workers in the federal government. They are also not afforded some of the basic workplace protections that most other government employees enjoy. Improving working conditions for officers is key to TSA’s evolution as a professional national security agency, and I look forward to hearing more about the status of this important report.

Second, TSA is substantially late in providing a strategy that was due in February regarding plans to open procurement processes to a wider network of technology companies, including increasing participation of small businesses. TSA relies on a small number of vendors to provide many of the screening technologies in use at airports nationwide. Small businesses, in particular, face difficulties in competing for TSA awards due to limited procurement cycles, high costs of certification, and lengthy testing and evaluation processes. I look forward to hearing what steps TSA is taking to ensure these processes are open and fair for all.

Finally, TSA is overdue in providing an assessment of potential enhancements to surface transportation security. Mass transit and other surface transportation systems are particularly vulnerable to terrorist attacks, and it is critical that TSA prioritizes completion of these requirements. TSA must work to come into full compliance with the requirements of the TSA Modernization Act as soon as possible.

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