



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

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Hearing Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)

TSA Modernization: Industry Perspectives on Key Security and Travel Reforms 25 Years After 9/11

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As we look back 25 years after the horrific attacks of September 11, 2001, which transformed aviation security in this country and around the world forever, we will never forget the lives lost on that tragic day. Unfortunately, it appears that my Republican colleagues have forgotten the key to our Nation's secure skies since 9/11: the hardworking employees of TSA.

House Republicans are looking the other way as the Trump Administration attempts to dismantle TSA's workforce, which is at the heart of everything the agency does. As the leader of any large organization knows, a mission cannot be accomplished without the people that help you get there in the first place—and TSA employees face enormous challenges to keep the traveling public safe.

Over the past few years, TSA officers have had to endure a global pandemic, two record-setting Republican-led government shutdowns, and daily aviation security threats. Through it all, these brave civil servants have kept showing up at airports across the country to keep us safe—even as the Trump Administration works to undermine them.

I have worked for decades to enshrine in law for TSA employees the basic workforce protections enjoyed by the rest of the federal workforce. Unfortunately, one of the first acts of the Trump Administration was to betray its respect for frontline security personnel and move to dismantle TSA officers' collective bargaining rights. Then, despite a Federal court issuing an injunction to keep a May 2024 collective bargaining agreement in place, then-Secretary Kristi Noem decided to ignore the rule of law and attempted to again terminate collective bargaining rights for TSA officers.

While the collective bargaining agreement remains in effect, it appears the Trump Administration will stop at nothing to inflict misery on this dedicated workforce, as it continues to contest the agreement in court. In fact, the Administration's proposal to implement the President's so-called "Golden Age of Travel" is intended to drive out the workforce and realize Project 2025's goal of privatizing the agency. Let's be clear about what privatizing would mean for the American people.

It would mean that under the Administration's proposal to expand the Screening Partnership Program, nearly 250 out of 440 airports around the country would be forced to give up their hardworking, dedicated TSA officers and replace them with corporations who only care about making a quick buck. It would mean that years of congressional investment in hiring and training a highly experienced TSA screening workforce—which has kept this Nation and air travelers safe for more than two decades—would go down the drain, as private screening companies would be allowed to cut pay to minimum levels.

And it would mean that despite the major advances in screening technology, personnel screening, and security protocols since 9/11, airports would be forced to accept a less experienced screening workforce

instead of the current roster of TSA officers, many of whom have decades of experience. To make matters worse, just last week—after shopping it around with industry stakeholders for months and failing to even consult Congress—TSA began rolling out a new program called “TSA Gold+.”

The program is a poorly constructed gimmick that attempts to sweeten the deal for airports to privatize under the guise of receiving the latest and greatest technology, but without any of the security benefits that a truly experienced screening workforce provides.

The Administration’s attempts to privatize TSA and strip the agency’s screening workforce of its collective bargaining rights would be detrimental to our national security, undermine all this Committee and so many others have worked so hard to strengthen for almost 25 years, and undo all the lessons learned since the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The American people deserve a secure and reliable travel experience, and House Democrats will work to ensure it remains that way for decades to come.

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