



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Field Hearing Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)

Examining DHS' Efforts to Improve Processing for International Visitors

Las Vegas, Nevada

May 24, 2022

I want to begin the hearing by thanking Congresswoman Dina Titus for bringing the Committee to Las Vegas to examine how the Department of Homeland Security can improve visitor processing. Congresswoman Titus is a leader in Congress on this issue and a champion for Las Vegas tourism because she knows how critical it is to this community and its economy.

Las Vegas received over 42 million visitors in 2019. After dropping off due to the pandemic, the number of visitors is on the upswing. Harry Reid International Airport saw a 66 percent increase in passenger volume from March 2021 to March of this year. The number of international passengers increased 800 percent during that time, though it remains below pre-pandemic numbers. As travel continues to resume, it is essential to let visitors know that America is ready and welcoming their return.

Yesterday, I had the opportunity to see firsthand some of the good work TSA is doing here at Harry Reid International Airport to develop new, innovative technology for its checkpoints. I also observed some of the enhancements CBP has made in recent years to strengthen and facilitate international visitor processing. Improvements like these are essential to not only strengthening security and serving as a force multiplier for TSA and CBP personnel, but also improving the passenger experience. A good experience at the airport gets a visitor's trip off on the right foot and makes them more likely to want to return.

I hope to hear from our TSA and CBP witnesses today about the progress they have made and what more can be done as travel rebounds from the pandemic. I also look forward to hearing from our airport and Las Vegas and Convention and Visitors Authority witnesses about what the Federal Government can do to help.

Finally, I want to commend the men and women of TSA and CBP, Harry Reid International Airport, and all those who have worked tirelessly under extraordinarily difficult conditions during the pandemic to keep the traveling public safe and secure. We appreciate your hard work today and every day and recognize that without you, American travel and tourism would not be possible.

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