



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

An Examination of the Transportation Security Administration's Fiscal Year 2025 Budget

May 15, 2024

Administrator Pekoske has worked closely with Congress to make great strides in expanding workplace rights and critical pay increases for TSA's workers, who have long been left behind.

Last July, 30% pay increases hit the paychecks of Transportation Security Officers across the country, finally bringing their pay in line with other Federal workers.

Those raises have driven a dramatic decrease in TSA's attrition rates, providing critical stability to the workforce.

Higher pay will enable TSA to keep up with busy summer travel, save money on training new personnel, and increase security by keeping TSOs with seniority and expertise within the agency.

This week marks the next steps forward in advancing TSA's workforce initiatives.

Yesterday, along with a group of bipartisan cosponsors, I introduced legislation to codify pay improvements and expanded collective bargaining rights for the TSA workforce in statute. Tomorrow, TSA and the American Federation of Government Employees—the union representing the TSO workforce—will sign a seven-year collective bargaining agreement, which was negotiated under the expanded framework issued by the Administrator.

The agreement will provide additional benefits to the workforce and prove that increased opportunities for workers to have a say in their working environment leads to better security outcomes.

TSA's pay raises and new collective bargaining agreement were made possible by the initial, historic funding provided by Democrats in the 2022 omnibus spending bill, and more recently, by the full-year minibus spending bill Congress passed this past March.

TSA's 2025 budget request would carry forward these efforts for another fiscal year.

The request includes a \$377 million increase for pay, which will allow TSA to provide workers the periodic pay raises and career ladder promotions provided to counterparts on the General Schedule wage system.

The request also includes a \$174 million increase to boost staffing levels and allow TSA to continue to screen record volumes of travelers effectively and efficiently.

Now, we must work with our colleagues on the Appropriations Committee to secure the funding needed to advance these priorities in 2025.

TSA's budget request includes a legislative proposal for authorizing committees to return to TSA the \$1.6 billion in passenger security fee collections slated for diversion in FY 2025.

In 2024, Congress was able to return \$800 million in fees, paid for by extending existing automatic cuts to non-Medicare mandatory spending by an extra year in FY 2032.

We must consider using similar offsets to return fee collections again this year and provide TSA necessary funding.

Even then, TSA will struggle to make ends meet, as the budget request fails to fund several key security programs, including the Visible Intermodal Prevention and Response, or "VIPR," program and the law enforcement officer and canine reimbursement programs.

The request also includes a proposal to end TSA's staffing of airport exit lanes, which Congress has repeatedly rejected, and it provides only minimal funding for next-generation technology procurements.

Congress must consider all possible solutions to address TSA's funding challenges, including increasing passenger security fees that have remained stagnant for many years, despite inflation and increases in airline ticket prices.

My bill, the Fund the TSA Act, would provide TSA with the resources it needs to invest in its workforce, screening technologies, and critical security programs by enacting a modest increase to passenger fees and indexing future fee amounts to inflation.

I hope this Committee will consider this bill at our next markup.

I would like to thank Administrator Pekoske for his support for the TSA workforce and his work to safeguard travelers.

I look forward to hearing more about his plans for the coming fiscal year and the future of the agency.

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