



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 TSA's FY 2024 Budget and Priorities

June 22, 2023

I am thankful for the steps Administrator Pekoske has taken to expand workplace rights and critical pay increases for TSA's workers, who have long been left behind. Those steps were made possible by the historic funding provided by Democrats in last year's Omnibus spending bill. With 30% pay increases set to hit paychecks next month, TSA has already seen a dramatic decrease of 40 to 50 percent in attrition among the TSA 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.

I know some of my colleagues across the aisle want to limit these life-changing pay increases to only frontline airport checkpoint screening personnel. This misguided attempt to protect the workers who need it most would actually deny much needed equity to explosives specialists, canine handlers, Federal Air Marshals, cybersecurity experts, and other workers essential to TSA's mission. It would also disincentivize career advancement and rob TSA of experienced veteran leaders among its workforce.

It is absolutely vital that we work with our colleagues on the Appropriations Committee to finish what we started and fully annualize these pay increases and safeguards for workplace rights for all TSA workers. I support the additional 1.1 billion dollars requested by President Biden to cover these initiatives for a full year in Fiscal Year 2024. We cannot go back on our promise to the hardworking men and women of TSA. Congress must consider all possible solutions to this funding challenge, including increasing passenger security fees that have remained stagnant for many years, despite inflation and increases in airline ticket prices.

That is why I have introduced the *Fund the TSA Act* to provide TSA with the resources it needs to invest in its workforce and the next generation of screening technologies by enacting a modest increase to passenger fees and indexing future fee amounts to inflation. This legislation would also end the diversion of security fees, returning to TSA approximately one-third of fee collections that have been taken away to offset unrelated government spending.

I would like to thank Administrator Pekoske for his support for the TSA workforce and for his work to safeguard American travelers. I look forward to hearing more about his plans for the coming Fiscal Year and for the future of the agency.

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