



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Opening Statement of Rep. Lou Correa (D-CA)

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

May 20, 2026

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson has been a fierce advocate for the TSA mission and workforce longer than anyone on this Committee, and I know his commitment to that cause remains strong.

Today, Committee Republicans are launching an effort to modernize the TSA to help advance President Trump's so called "Golden Age of Travel." Sadly, all that glitters is not gold, as travel under the Trump Administration has been less than a total success.

Since Trump returned to office last year, here are just a few examples of what has happened in our travel system:

- Planes have collided on the runway and fallen from our sky, a major airline has gone out of business, and the Department of Homeland security used taxpayer funding to purchase luxury jets for executive travel
- Our friends and allies all over the world have issued travel warnings for visitors to the United States because of the Trump Administration's inhumane immigration crackdown
- Even worse, this Administration has repeatedly forced government shutdown after government shutdown to insist on maintaining an unaccountable, out-of-control police force at ICE, leading to the longest TSA wait times in history
- President Trump launched a reckless war of choice, which has led to massive spikes in costs for jet fuel and airline tickets
- And at TSA, the Administration has attempted to dismantle collective bargaining rights and proposed forcing more than half the nation's airports to bring in private security, prioritizing profits over security.

Clearly, Trump's "Golden Age of Travel" really means you need to have gold to travel.

This Congress, under Republican control, this Committee has done very little TSA oversight, even as we embark on an effort to modernize TSA. In fact, the Committee has not held a single hearing or Member briefing focused on TSA with TSA witnesses.

The acting TSA administrator has twice appeared alongside other components at hearings with a broad DHS focus, and the Subcommittee on Transportation and Maritime Security held one TSA-focused hearing with a non-government panel. That's it.

Since day one, the Administration has executed a coordinated campaign to carry out its Project 2025 agenda to privatize TSA and sell its parts for profit. To start, the Trump Administration attempted to rescind the collective bargaining rights of Transportation Security Officers and cancel their legally binding contract with TSA.

Thankfully, AFGE challenged the Administration in court, leading to an injunction keeping the collective bargaining agreement in effect.

The Administration then disobeyed a court order and attempted to revoke the contract anyway, causing the judge to threaten to hold officials in contempt of court. Even worse, the Administration forced two long, unnecessary government shutdowns, pushing TSOs to work without pay for months.

As a result, TSA workers left the agency in droves—not because they weren't committed to the mission, but because the Administration and Republicans in Congress weren't committed to them.

For more than two months, Republicans refused to take up a bipartisan bill to fund TSA and other parts of DHS that would have passed easily —only to eventually pass that bill on the floor.

TSOs are critical national security workers. They should not be used as political pawns. The Administration's attacks against the TSA workforce threaten to undermine bipartisan effort to improve TSO pay and address dangerously high levels of attrition.

In the President's budget request for fiscal year 2027, TSA proposes requiring approximately 250 small airports to bring in private security under the Screening Partnership Program, or SPP. SPP was created in 2001 to allow airports to voluntarily opt out of TSA screening.

When an airport applies and is approved to participate in SPP, TSA contracts with a private vendor that conducts screening under TSA oversight.

Private contractors must follow the same security procedures and maintain approximately the same staffing levels as TSA.

However, they are only required to pay screeners a salary matching TSA's entry-level pay. Unlike the government, private companies must turn a profit to stay in business, so they build a profit margin by cutting workers' pay down to the minimum. A TSO with 20 years' experience at an airport that joins SPP will be offered entry-level pay or be out of a job.

Let me say that again as clearly as I can: the Screening Partnership Program is built on cutting officers' pay.

Unsurprisingly, SPP airports have higher attrition rates and less stable workforces. At times, TSA has had to deploy TSOs from other airports to assist at SPP airports because of retention problems.

Airports recognize the downsides of privatizing. Over the past 25 years, airports have had the option to join SPP at any time, and only a small handful have done so.

To try to entice airports, TSA has recently rolled out a new, expanded version of SPP called "Gold Plus."

After pitching the program to airports and private industry for months without notifying Congress, TSA finally notified Congress of this program last week.

Under Gold Plus, private security companies would be responsible for acquiring and maintaining screening technology equipment in addition to conducting screening—all paid for by cuts to officers' pay.

But the fancy new technology promised by Gold Plus is dangerous and reckless, as technology cannot replace the experience of people who make the security checkpoint work as they have been working for the past 25 years. The Trump Administration's proposals would have us spending record amounts on immigration enforcement and border security, while creating a gaping security hole at airport checkpoints.

Clearly, Republicans could invest in new TSA technology if they wanted to—but the truth is, this isn't really about saving money; it's about pushing a right-wing, anti-government ideology.

Those who endorse the Administration's attempts to privatize TSA are placing corporate profits above their promises to "never forget."

To meet this moment, Congress should emphatically reject proposals to mandate privatization and instead ensure SPP remains a voluntary program.

In addition, the Committee should advance Ranking Member Thompson's Rights for the TSA Workforce Act, of which Chairman Garbarino and I are both proud cosponsors. The Rights for the TSA Workforce Act would apply title 5 of the U.S. Code to TSA, providing workers with full collective bargaining rights, third-party appeal processes, and fair pay. This bill has passed the House with bipartisan support, and it is needed now more than ever. It is long past time to advance it this Congress.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses how else we can support and strengthen the TSA workforce to ensure it can continue to meet our Nation's transportation security demands.

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