

**Opening Statement of Ranking Member Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX) as
prepared
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Transportation Security
Committee on Homeland Security
“Industry Perspectives: Authorizing the Transportation Security
Administration for Fiscal Years 2012 and 2013”**

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Rail workers, transit security professionals, pilots and flight attendants, are just a few of the many professionals who find it within their job description the responsibility of securing our Nation’s railways, skies and pipelines against terrorist attack.

When we talk about security, we are really talking about people, and the critical question for me then is: Are transportation workers in this country trained and equipped to recognize and mitigate a potential terrorist act?

Let me say, just as I did in our first hearing on TSA authorization last month with Administrator Pistole, that we simply cannot forget the lessons learned from the past as we look to preventing future terrorist attacks.

As a Congress and as a Nation we have taken many steps to shore up the vulnerabilities in protocols and processes that enabled the 9/11 hijackers to penetrate the system and destroy thousands of lives.

We decided to move AWAY from a system with various security companies operating checkpoint security TO a federalized system of professional screeners who can quickly adapt to threats based upon the latest intelligence. We implemented mandatory screening for explosives for checked baggage and cargo on passenger planes.

We directed that cockpit doors be strengthened, and we deployed more air marshals to secure the aircraft cabin on high-risk flights.

However Mr. Chairman, our work is not done.

Just this year alone there have been at least five incidents where a flight attendant has had to subdue a passenger to secure the aircraft cabin. I request to submit a list of these incidents for the record.

While these were not terrorist incidents, they reveal how important a layer of security the flight crews represent.

In the last Congress when we passed our bi-partisan TSA Authorization bill, H.R. 2200, we recognized this and included provisions to improve TSA oversight of air carriers’ basic security programs, and directed that TSA work with industry to implement accessible advanced security training for flight attendants.

I continue to support these concepts and continue NOT to understand opposition to improving aircraft cabin security.

With a small investment in time and training, we can take the next step in aircraft cabin security, by ensuring that cabin crew are fully trained to meet today's very real threats.

And let us not forget that when you are in the air and when there are no air marshals, it is the flight crew that is the very last line of defense.

I say again, ten years later, let us not forget the lessons learned from 9/11 as we look to addressing the persistent and evolving terrorist threat.

Would we in fact be even having a discussion on crew training on September 12, 2001?

For instance, how many lives were saved when crew and passengers foiled the hijackers on United flight 93, sending it into the ground in Pennsylvania at 580 miles per hour, sacrificing themselves instead of allowing the terrorist to kill thousands more?

I simply say, let us not be penny wise and pound foolish when it comes to security.

Regarding rail, mass transit, and pipeline security, I have introduced H.R. 1900, the Surface Transportation and Mass Transit Security Act, which establishes the Surface Transportation Inspection Office and a surface transportation advisory committee for stakeholder consultation on security programs.

H.R. 1900 also would increase the number of canine teams for transit security purposes.

Given the consistent threat to our transportation systems, as evidenced by information made public following the demise of bin Laden, we simply must bring our surface security efforts in line with aviation, and I urge the Majority to consider this bill to be part of the overall TSA authorization process.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I have requested a field hearing on pipeline security, and I know Ranking Member Thompson would also like to have a full committee pipeline security hearing in Washington.

This is a very serious matter as the consequences from a pipeline rupture are always severe. I hope we can get that scheduled quickly so we can understand how the Departments of Homeland Security and Transportation are working together to improve safety and security along America's thousands of pipeline miles.