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**Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson**

***Industry Perspectives: Authorizing the  
Transportation Security Administration for FY 2012 and 2013***

July 12, 2011 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Transportation Security subcommittee hearing entitled “Industry Perspectives: Authorizing the Transportation Security Administration for FY 2012 and 2013”:

“As we proceed with our discussions on TSA authorization, I look forward to hearing their feedback and insight into the transportation security programs administered by TSA.

Specifically, today I am interested in hearing how federal security programs and policies for transportation are impacting our frontline workers who are our most reliable layer of security and defense against acts of terrorism.

Since the demise of Osama bin Laden, it has been revealed in the public domain that terrorists continue to be interested in developing plots to sabotage aviation and mass transit systems.

This threat, however, is not new, and in the nearly ten years since the 9/11 attacks, it is imperative that we, Congress, examine how the Department of Homeland Security and the Transportation Security Administration are addressing the current and evolving threat to our transportation systems.

In the Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007, my colleagues and I worked diligently to ensure that security provisions were included to provide rail, transit and intercity bus workers with meaningful security training to better prepare them to recognize and address security threats.

I am disappointed that these security training regulations have yet to be issued, and until they are issued, I will take every opportunity to remind the Department that this is an important security requirement that must be implemented immediately.

Since the start of this Congress, I have been gravely concerned about the cuts associated with the Transportation Security Grant Program and what these cuts will mean to transit agencies and mass transit security across the Nation.

The Republican Majority have, for the first time, cut homeland security funding which may result in serious compromises in security.

Throughout the last few months, the Committee has learned valuable information from stakeholders pointing to increased security vulnerabilities if Congress fails to restore funding for transportation security programs.

As I mentioned earlier, the threat to our surface and mass transportation security systems continues to evolve, and senseless cuts in security funding are taking us a step in the wrong direction.

On the aviation security front, a provision of particular interest to me is language to codify the Aviation Security Advisory Committee or ASAC.

The ASAC was a critical platform for interaction between stakeholders, including air carriers and Labor unions, on critical security programs.

One issue that appears to be addressed by all stakeholders is the need for better information sharing on threats to the system, and I believe the ASAC is an excellent mechanism for industry input and review of the Department's transportation security programs and directives.

I thank the Cargo Airline Association, the U.S. Travel Association and the Airports Council International for their support of my bill, H.R. 1447, which would re-establish the ASAC and permanently codify it.

I understand that TSA has recently announced in the Federal Register that the ASAC will be re-established, and I think this is welcome news, but given that TSA has not consistently kept the ASAC chartered, it is necessary that it be codified.

I look forward to working with the Majority on including this in the TSA authorization.

Finally, I am concerned with TSA's proposed reorganization of the Transportation Threat Assessment and Credentialing division known as T-TAC.

I am concerned that this reorganization is inefficient and may support potential fee increases to industry and workers for transportation worker credentials, including for aviation and maritime workers.

Stakeholders should be concerned with these developments at T-TAC.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Jackson Lee, I thank you for your work as we proceed with the authorization process, and I look forward to working with you both in producing a good TSA authorization bill that contains provision to further secure our transportation systems against terrorist attack."

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