

Statement of Ranking Member Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX)

Subcommittee on Transportation Security

Committee on Homeland Security

Markup of H.R. 2179

March 7, 2012

Thank you for convening this meeting of the Subcommittee where we will consider H.R. 2179. This thoughtful legislation was introduced by the Chairman of the Committee on Veterans Affairs, Mr. Miller of Florida.

I am confident that this bill will garner the unanimous support of our panel today. The bill would aid the USO's efforts to provide comfort and peace of mind to members of our Armed Services and their families by directing that unclaimed money collected at security checkpoints be transferred to the organization for the purpose of supporting its activities at airport centers.

Currently, the USO operates forty-one stateside airport centers. According to the USO, in 2011, these centers were visited nearly two million times by troops and their families. Including, I am happy to report, airport centers at both Hobby and Bush Airports in Houston.

According to TSA, over four-hundred thousand dollars has been unclaimed and collected at security checkpoints in each of the last two years. H.R. 2179 would direct that unclaimed funds be used for the noble purpose of supporting the brave men and women who serve our nation in the Armed Services and their families as they travel.

As Members of Congress, we have a special responsibility to do all that we can to support those who serve both during active service and retirement and during times of war and peace. While applauding the Chairman for bringing this measure before the Subcommittee, I concurrently urge him to afford the Subcommittee an opportunity to consider legislation aimed at aiding our veteran's transition into the civilian workforce.

In December, I had the honor of kicking off the Yellow Ribbon Campaign for Houston to welcome home our troops who served valiantly in Iraq. In addition to welcoming them home, we should work tirelessly, as they did in combat, to assist them in transitioning to civilian life with good paying jobs, commensurate with their skills.

On another note Mr. Chairman, as we have previously discussed, there are currently two important transportation security measures that received the unanimous support of this Subcommittee and the Full Committee pending on the Union Calendar.

H.R. 1165, the "*Transportation Security Administration Ombudsman Act of 2011*" which I introduced and H.R. 1447, the "*Aviation Security Stakeholder Participation Act of 2011*," introduced by the Ranking Member of the Full Committee, Mr. Thompson of Mississippi, have lingered on the Union Calendar for over four months without consideration by the Full House.

Both are important transportation security bills and I would urge the Committee to do all that it can to see that the Republican Leadership schedules these bills for consideration on the House floor. Additionally, in September, this Subcommittee considered and forwarded to the Full Committee a Transportation Security Administration Authorization Act. That bill has yet to be scheduled for consideration by the Full Committee. Any light you may be able to shed on when the Full Committee may consider that legislation would be appreciated, Mr. Chairman.

With that Mr. Chairman, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 2179 and yield back the balance of my time.