



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

Rightsizing TSA Bureaucracy and Workforce Without Compromising Security

March 28, 2012 (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 “Rightsizing TSA Bureaucracy and Workforce Without Compromising Security”:

“Ensuring the security of our nation’s transportation systems is a vital Federal responsibility - a responsibility that the Members of this Committee take seriously.

Unfortunately, other Committees continue to attempt to encroach on this Committee’s jurisdiction over the Transportation Security Administration.

Those Committees have gone so far as including provisions regarding TSA’s operations within legislation such as the FAA Re-Authorization Act.

As the authorizing committee for TSA, we have the responsibility of ensuring that taxpayer funds for transportation security are used wisely.

Accordingly, a review of TSA staffing levels is an appropriate area to explore and this is the appropriate Committee to explore it.

However, I find the Majority’s focus on whether TSA’s frontline workforce is the right size inconsistent with their calls to privatize screeners.

According to TSA, contracting out screening operations to private screening companies costs taxpayers three to nine percent more than if the entire system was federalized.

We should consider “rightsizing” TSA’s frontline workforce by insourcing screening operations and saving taxpayer dollars.

Additionally, taxpayers would be well-served if we required TSA to provide scientific validation of programs before they are expanded.

According to GAO, TSA has yet to scientifically validate the Screening Passengers by Observational Technique program.

Despite the lack of scientific validation or evidence of effectiveness, this program—known as SPOT---has been expanded nationwide.

We have spent \$800 million dollars on this unproven program since 2007.

I still think that \$800 million is a great deal of money.

I look forward to hearing from Mr. McLaughlin, the Assistant Administrator for Security Operations, on why Congress should continue to provide support for this program.

I am also interested in hearing from Mr. Nicholson on how the ongoing headquarters re-organization at TSA will produce savings.

Without creating savings and operational improvements, this reorganization will simply move around people without achieving a purpose.

We cannot focus on moving boxes on an organization chart when terrorists still seek to do us harm.

Before yielding back, I would point out that the TSA Authorization bill introduced by the Chairman and considered by this subcommittee considered last September, contains a provision that would require TSA to develop a plan to reduce its workforce by five percent by the end of FY 2013.

I look forward to hearing from the witnesses on the feasibility of achieving such reductions without compromising security.

Additionally, any light the Chairman may be able to shed on when that legislation may be considered by the Full Committee would be appreciated.”

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