

NEWS ALERT



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Homeland Security Committee

Rep. Bennie G. Thompson, Ranking Member



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

Is TSA's Planned Purchase of CAT/BPSS a Wise Use of Taxpayer Dollars?

June 19, 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 “Is TSA's Planned Purchase of CAT/BPSS a Wise Use of Taxpayer Dollars?”:

“While the title of today’s hearing implies that we will discuss the potential procurement of a single technology, there are other companion issues we should explore. We need to ask what TSA has learned from previous procurement mistakes. We need to know whether TSA has implemented procurement reforms recommended by both Members of this Committee and the Government Accountability Office. And We need to ask whether TSA has a procurement strategy that ensures taxpayer dollars are invested wisely in technology that truly makes the flying public more secure.

During the previous two Congresses, under the Democratic Majority, we held several hearings examining TSA and DHS’ strategy for testing, evaluating and procuring new security technologies. As a result of our oversight, we produced a TSA Authorization bill that passed the House with overwhelming bipartisan support. That measure, authored by Representative Jackson Lee, contained several provisions aimed at ensuring that TSA effectively spends taxpayer dollars on new technologies.

Last year, when Subcommittee Chairman Rogers and Full Committee Chairman King sent a letter to Administrator Pistole indicating that they would be producing a TSA Authorization bill, I was cautiously optimistic that our bipartisan work in this area would continue in the 112th Congress. Unfortunately, at this late date in the 112th Congress, the Committee has still not produced a TSA Authorization bill for consideration by the House. The likelihood of the Majority producing such a bill diminishes with each passing day.

Turning to the technology referenced in today’s hearing title, CAT/BPSS, I look forward to hearing from both TSA and GAO on how this technology may be used to close the known security vulnerability created by the use of fraudulent IDs and boarding passes.

This vulnerability was highlighted last year when a man boarded a plane and flew from New York to L.A. using a fraudulent boarding pass. I am particularly interested in hearing from TSA about the steps it has taken, and plans to take, to ensure that this procurement moves forward after a full cost-benefit analysis. Such an analysis must not only consider the effectiveness of this new technology, but must also consider whether additional training of TSO’s could play a role in addressing this vulnerability. Also, part of the cost-benefit analysis must include TSA’s assessment that the problem of fraudulent document identification requires a technological solution.

The procurement and installation of these machines is slated to cost about \$100 million. As stewards of the tax dollar, we need to be certain that the need for this technology has been firmly established. I will also be interested in hearing how TSA chose the three vendors currently competing for the opportunity to contract for the production of the machines at issue.

As I raised with Administrator Pistole during his last visit to this panel, I am concerned that TSA does not provide a way for small and minority-owned businesses to compete for contracts to produce security technologies.”

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FOR MORE INFORMATION: Please contact Adam Comis at (202) 225-9978

United States House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
H2-117, Ford House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515
Phone: (202) 226-2616 | Fax: (202) 226-4499
<http://chsdemocrats.house.gov>