

# **Statement of Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX), Ranking Member**

## **Subcommittee on Transportation Security**

### **“Has TSA met the Deadline to Provide Expedited Screening to Military Service Members?”**

**July 11, 2012**

I am pleased that TSA and the Department of Defense are joining us to discuss how the Federal government can continue to make significant contributions to improve the lives of the men and women who serve and protect the United States of America.

I have longed championed intergovernmental collaboration and I am pleased that today we will receive testimony about efforts underway to strengthen collaboration between DoD and DHS to support our servicemen and women.

While it is important to pay tribute to those who serve in the military, our actions must also honor their sacrifice. We cannot waiver on that front.

Today, I look forward to our dialogue regarding ways we can support our heroes by providing small but necessary accommodations to our service members and veterans as they pass through our nation’s airports.

It is also important to recognize TSA for its contributions to assisting our veterans.

For example, Administrator Pistole worked with the Honor Flight Network, which is a system established to enable our veterans the opportunity to visit the Nation’s Capital to tour their memorials, to ensure their screening was conducted in a dignified manner.

Further, TSA has initiated the Wounded Warrior Program, which includes modified screening polices at the airport checkpoint to ensure that military personnel and veterans who were wounded when they answered their country’s call to duty are screened with the dignity and respect they deserve.

Finally, I would be remiss if I failed to mention that veterans comprise about one-quarter of the TSA workforce.

At our hearing yesterday, we heard from the other side of the aisle regarding their desire to cut the TSA workforce by some thirty percent.

According to Mr. McLaughlin’s testimony, TSA employs over ten-thousand veterans.

I would encourage my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to be mindful that a cut of thirty percent to the TSA workforce would result in three-thousand veterans who answered the call to duty, following 9/11, being back out on the street looking for work.

I hope that TSA’s implementation of these policies for the military and veterans signals its willingness to move toward instituting the kind of common sense screening practices that Democratic Members of this Committee have long called for.

I remain convinced that TSA can also institute screening practices that ensure the respectful treatment of passengers with disabilities without compromising security.

I commend Administrator Pistole and this Administration for these efforts to re-examine its screening protocols.

As such, I would like to take this opportunity to note the following TEN positive changes instituted by TSA at our checkpoints that have been enhanced by Administrator Pistole since he joined TSA.

- #1. Screening modifications for children under the age of 12, which ensure several non-intrusive steps are taken by TSOs, while screening children at the checkpoint.
- #2. Screening modifications for the elderly that allow TSOs to respectfully screen the elderly, particularly those who may rely on mobility devices, such as wheelchairs and walkers, and those who need further assistance throughout screening operations.
- #3. Screening modifications for those passengers with certain medical conditions, this process allows passengers to communicate a sensitive medical condition that should be considered by a TSO during the screening process.
- #4. The establishment and expansion of an expedited screening service, known as Pre-Check, for passengers who voluntarily undergo a background check administered by DHS.
- #5. TSA has also implemented a Risk Based Screening initiative, known as the Known Crewmember Program, designed to serve pilots, upon verification of employment, with an expedited screening process and allowing TSOs to place greater emphasis on the unknown threats at our checkpoints.
- #6. Modified screening procedures for military members traveling in uniform that honor our U.S. military personnel by allowing them to undergo flexible screening procedures that make traveling in uniform less burdensome.
- #7. TSA has integrated the use of Pre-Check lanes by active military personnel when they are not in uniform.
- #8. TSA, in partnership with DOD, has instituted a wounded warrior program where a severely injured service member, family member or other representative can contact the Federal government and obtain the necessary assistance to receive a simple and trouble-free screening experience at the airport.
- #9. TSA has reduced screening requirements for Honor Flight Network flights, which support our veterans who wish to fly across country to visit the memorials in the National Capital Region.
- #10. TSA continues to work on developing and deploying non-intrusive technology, such as the use of AIT with added privacy safeguards that facilitate airport checkpoint screening operations, while protecting our privacy and civil liberties.

As the veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan return home, let's work together to make sure not only that they are able to move through airports without problems, but let us commit ourselves to ensuring that they are welcomed home and provided all the assistance that a grateful nation can bring to bear.