

**Opening Statement of Ranking Member Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX)**  
**Subcommittee on Transportation Security**  
**Committee on Homeland Security**

**“Breach of Trust: Addressing Misconduct Among TSA Screeners”**

**August 1, 2012**

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This Congress, we have focused on the efforts by the Federal Government to empower and strengthen our front line employees. Transportation Security Officers working at our airports across the country are a first line of defense against terrorism.

Through my oversight work as Chair of this Subcommittee in previous Congresses, the Committee has found that these workers suffer from high injury rates, attrition, and exceptionally low morale.

Until recently, there was no hope for them to obtain the necessary workplace protections - collective bargaining rights and whistleblower protections - that other federal employees enjoy. However, today, we are closer to achieving this goal and in turn establishing a workforce that can place a greater focus on the security mission at hand.

The lack of workplace protections for screening personnel, combined with poor workforce management, increases costs and decreases security. Collective Bargaining Rights will ensure that TSOs are regarded with the same standard and authority as other critical security personnel. And we can have confidence that these rights will not interfere with proper steps being taken to address criminal activity and/or failure in the training program.

Mr. Chairman, as we explore today’s hearing topic, I must caution you that we must make it clear as to what type of misconduct we are referring to. In one instance, we may be discussing alleged criminal activity that TSOs engage in and therefore must face legal consequences.

On the other hand, we must take a closer look at instances when TSOs fail to comply with standard operating procedures at the checkpoint and what steps are taken by TSA to identify this activity and address vulnerabilities in the training and enforcement program.

This hearing is an opportunity to question TSA about how it ensures that screening procedures are followed and how it determines whether the remedy for misconduct should be discipline or re-medial training for TSOs.

Proper training of TSOs is critical to the security of our aviation system. That is why I, along with my Democratic colleagues of the Committee, have consistently called for providing TSOs with additional training whenever egregious screening operations and missteps occur.

I look forward to learning more from TSA about how the most recent reorganization it has undertaken will address these concerns. In recent hearings, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle have stressed the importance of determining adequate staffing level needs in order to create efficiencies that do not compromise security at our airports.

In these tight budgetary times, it is incumbent upon all of us to find ways to be more efficient without compromising security. We cannot however, cut corners when it comes to transportation security.

I also look forward to hearing from Mr. Halinski on TSA’s staffing allocation model and its determination to adequately staff our security checkpoints. I would also expect to hear from him on the cost of outsourcing of screening operations.

Finally, I hope Mr. Halinski can solve a mystery we have tried to unravel for over a year—how will TSA’s ongoing headquarters re-organization reduce costs and create efficiencies.