

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson*****TSA's Efforts to Advance Risk-Based Security***

March 14, 2013 (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 “TSA’s Efforts to Advance Risk-Based Security”:

“This subcommittee has a legacy of bipartisan cooperation and productivity. This is the only subcommittee to have produced an authorization bill for the component of DHS it oversees in each of the past two Congresses. The TSA Authorization bill produced by this subcommittee in the 111th Congress, passed the House with nearly 400 votes. Unfortunately, that measure never saw action in the Senate.

This subcommittee also produced an authorization bill in the 112th Congress. However, that bill was never considered by the Full Committee. TSA has not been re-authorized since it was established by Congress in 2001, and this lack of Congressional input shows. While some progress has been made to improve TSA’s performance and functioning, many programs and activities need reform.

For instance, TSA invests millions of taxpayer dollars in new security technologies without fully vetting them, TSA continues to deploy and utilize so-called “Behavior Detection Officers” despite the fact that this method of screening has not been scientifically validated by an independent third party, and TSA is currently under review by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission for failure to have a standard EEO process.

The common theme is that each of these deficiencies point to a failure to implement processes that are common in other government entities. TSA’s apparent reluctance to employ accepted processes and procedures was recently highlighted by a decision that makes policy changes without substantive engagement with key stakeholders.

The decision to allow certain knives and other items through TSA checkpoints without meaningful engagement with flight attendant representatives, law enforcement officials, the employees responsible for implementing the changes, air carriers and other key stakeholders has caused chaos and anger. The backlash that has occurred from this decision may have been avoided if a routine process to review security policy changes had been undertaken. But instead, TSA’s actions have left many Americans wondering why they cannot take regular shampoo in a carry-on bag but can take a knife.

Because of these missteps, I will reintroduce legislation passed by the House last Congress codifying the Aviation Security Advisory Committee today. This legislation encourages TSA to formally engage and collaborate on policy decisions with key stakeholders.

An integral part of a reliable risk-based process is information. We cannot call our screening process risk-based or reliable if it uses measures that have not been scientifically validated.

And because the overwhelming majority of people who fly are not dangerous, a reliable risk-based process must benefit a large population—not just a few cherry-picked groups.

In a speech before the Brookings Institution last month, Secretary Napolitano stated that by the end of 2013, TSA expects that one in four passengers will qualify for expedited screening. I support that goal. However, last year, only 1 in 12 passengers qualified for expedited screening.

I look forward to hearing from TSA about how it will more than triple the number of passengers receiving expedited screening in the remaining 10 months of the year without compromising security.

Before yielding back, I would like to thank Administrator Pistole for appearing before the subcommittee today. Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent that statements in opposition to TSA's announced change to the Prohibited Items List that the Committee received from the Transport Workers Union and Delta Air Lines be inserted into the record along with public statements opposing the changes made by The Coalition of Air Line Pilots Association, The Association of Flight Attendants, The American Federation of Government Employees, and The Federal Law Enforcement Officers' Association."

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