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Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)

The Future of the Transportation Security Administration

Subcommittee on Transportation & Protective Security

February 2, 2017

The Transportation Security Administration is essential to our nation's security.

I believe that this Committee, particularly this Subcommittee should work in a bipartisan fashion to achieve the shared goal of advancing TSA.

However, we cannot discuss TSA's future without hearing from the agency. It is my hope that after confirmation of a TSA Administrator, this Subcommittee will hold a hearing to receive the Administrator's vision for the agency.

When we discuss TSA and its future, it is imperative that we give attention to its workforce.

Contrary to statements made by the President –TSA is not a “disaster” and has not been on the brink of “falling apart”.

Unfortunately, the President has used his public platform to disparage TSA employees, many of whom are TSOs, federal workers who are at the frontline of aviation security.

The President's irresponsible and baseless statements about the component, which is already plagued with low morale, demoralizes a workforce who work day in and day out but do not receive the compensation and benefits of other federal employees.

I am introducing a bill that will give the TSOs the same rights as federal employees.

As we consider options for improving TSA, I urge both Congress and the Administration to look for viable solutions that actually improve security.

I know some of my colleagues across the aisle believe that putting aviation security in the hands of contractors is a viable solution for TSA.

I disagree. Our nation's aviation security should not be for sale.

The Pre-9/11 model of having a privatized screening workforce, is not an option that can improve security. Instead, it puts security directly in the hands of the best bidder.

When it comes to our nation's security, we cannot operate off of the best deal.

Instead we have to explore solutions, including improving technological advancements. TSA needs technologies that address the threats of tomorrow, instead of the threats from yesterday.

TSA also needs to ensure that it engages with the small business community to ensure that those businesses with ideas and technologies to improve security are not left out just because of their size.

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Media contact: Adam Comis at (202) 225-9978

