



TESTIMONY

OF

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SENIOR OFFICIAL PERFORMING THE DUTIES OF THE ADMINISTRATOR
TRANSPORTATION SECURITY ADMINISTRATION
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

BEFORE

THE

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

ON

*“Funding Lapse and Security Gaps: Assessing the Harmful Impacts of the DHS Shutdown on
Americans”*

March 25, 2026
Washington, D.C.

Introduction

Chairman Garbarino, Ranking Member Thompson, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the invitation to testify before you today on behalf of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA). I am honored to be here and grateful for the longstanding and productive partnership TSA shares with this Committee.

TSA was created on the heels of 9/11 to help the United States stay a step ahead of terrorists and bad actors, and we are nearing our twenty-fifth anniversary later this year. We have entered each fiscal year of this agency's existence under a Continuing Resolution, and we have been shut down for 50% of this fiscal year. However, the transportation sector remains a top target for our enemies and terrorists, all while passenger volumes are reaching record highs. A lack of funding and predictability of resourcing poses significant challenges to our ability to deliver transportation security with the level of excellence we expect, and Americans deserve. We need Congress to pass the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) budget for Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 and fund TSA.

Shutdown Impacts: TSA Workforce

TSA's greatest asset is its people, and I want to thank them for their unrelenting efforts day in and day out to secure the Nation's transportation systems. TSA's national security mission does not stop during a shutdown, and the Agency continues to screen around three million passengers on peak days. Around 95%, or more than 61,000, of TSA employees are deemed essential and must continue working to protect the traveling public during a shutdown, while not getting paid. Congress must fund DHS and pay our talented and dedicated TSA workforce.

Missed Paychecks

TSA employees work at over 430 commercial airports, living within your communities, not getting paid for performing incredibly challenging and taxing jobs. Many Transportation Security Officers (TSOs) work paycheck to paycheck trying to support themselves and their families. During a shutdown, the ability to pay for rent, bills, groceries, childcare, and gas becomes very challenging. TSA employees have already worked 87 days without getting paid in FY 2026, and by this Friday, March 27, we will be at nearly \$1 billion in payroll that has not been paid in a timely manner. The dedicated public servants that work within DHS and TSA deserve better and to be paid.

We have heard reports of some airports asking the public to donate grocery store and gas gift cards in amounts of \$10 or \$20 to support officers. Officers are reportedly sleeping in their cars at airports to save gas money, selling their blood and plasma, and taking on second and third jobs to make ends meet, all while expected to perform at the highest level when in uniform to protect the traveling public. Many have received eviction notices, lost their childcare, missed bill payments and been charged late fees, damaged their credit, defaulted on loans, and have been unable to even qualify for a loan to help ease the financial burden during the shutdown.

Recruitment, Retention, Attrition, and Morale

Shutdowns and funding uncertainties have real and measurable impacts on recruitment, retention, and employee morale. TSA employees are dedicated public servants that want to continue to keep the traveling public safe and secure, but they are running out of options to keep a roof over their head and put food on the table.

During the 43-day government shutdown in October and November 2025, around 1,110 TSOs separated from TSA, representing a 25% increase in TSO separations from the same time in 2024. Since the government funding lapsed in February, and the cost of coming to work is becoming more untenable for the workforce, as of Tuesday, March 24, TSA has already lost around 460 officers and daily call out rates at airport checkpoints have increased from 4% (pre-shutdown) to 11% nationwide, with multiple airports experiencing greater than 40% and 50% call out rates. TSA is currently grappling with the Spring Break travel surge and experiencing about 5% higher travel volume than last year, all with fewer TSOs working at the checkpoints to screen the higher number of passengers. This is reducing the Agency's operational capacity at airports, increasing wait times to over four and half hours at certain airports, raising major security risks and missed flights for passengers.

To maintain the security of our transportation systems at the level American's deserve, TSA needs to be able to retain its employees. Losing employees creates tremendous staffing, readiness, and operational challenges. The hiring and rigorous onboarding process for TSOs includes assessments, interviews, background checks, and a comprehensive four to six months training program to ensure candidates are fully qualified to perform the screening duties at checkpoints.

Shutdown Impact: FIFA World Cup

TSA does not have the luxury of time. The FIFA World Cup is kicking off on June 11 – less than three months away. We are anticipating a significant influx in passenger volume as fans travel through our airports to see the games. Even if TSA were to hire new officers upon conclusion of the DHS shutdown, those officers would not be able to work on the checkpoint until well after the World Cup has concluded.

Conclusion

The safety and security of Americans and the traveling public must not continue to be threatened by budget uncertainties. On behalf of TSA, I respectfully urge Congress to provide full-year funding for DHS without delay. Chairman Garbarino, Ranking Member Thompson, and distinguished members of the Committee, I thank you for your support of TSA and look forward to your questions.