



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 APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE -  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY  
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ON

*“Oversight Hearing – Potential DHS Shutdown Impacts”*

February 11, 2026  
Washington, D.C.

Chairman Amodei, Ranking Member Cuellar, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee. 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 Subcommittee.

I would like to start by thanking TSA's employees for their unrelenting efforts day in and day out to secure the Nation's transportation systems. TSA is an agile security agency, embodied by a dedicated and professional workforce that serves around the clock to outmatch an increasingly sophisticated and dynamic threat. TSA's greatest asset is its people. From our Transportation Security Officers (TSOs), Canine Handlers, Federal Air Marshalls (FAMs), and more, these men and women embody the Agency's core values. They worked through the longest government shutdown in American history, many without pay and experiencing personal financial hardships.

Travel is one of the largest economic sectors in the United States, contributing around \$2.9 trillion dollars annually to the economy, and supporting over 15 million jobs for Americans. With the transportation sector remaining a top target for malign actors, and passenger volumes at airports reaching record highs in 2025—including eight out of the top ten busiest travel days on record—it is more critical than ever to have a technologically advanced, seamless, and secure aviation security system. In 2025 alone, TSA screened 906.7 million passengers, 480 million checked bags, and 2.1 billion carry-on bags.

Under the Trump Administration and the leadership of Secretary Noem, TSA is laser-focused on returning the United States back to being the top global travel destination, fortifying travel security, renewing its commitment to the traveler experience, and serving as a responsible steward of the American tax dollar. This starts with Congress funding the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Fiscal Year 2026 Budget, paying the workforce, ensuring operational consistency and predictability, and enabling us to plan for and deploy upgraded, state-of-the-art technology to airports nationwide. With the United States hosting the 2026 FIFA World Cup in June of this year, TSA does not have the luxury of time to prepare for the influx of passengers and international travelers. A lack of funding and predictability will pose significant challenges on our ability to deliver transportation security for the American public with the level of excellence we expect, and the American taxpayer deserves.

### **Shutdown Impacts**

TSA will not be able to achieve the abovementioned priorities and modernize transportation security in a timely manner if Congress does not fund DHS through the end of Fiscal Year 2026. Founded almost 25 years ago in the wake of the September 11, 2001 (9/11) terrorist attacks, TSA's critical national security mission does not stop during a shutdown, and the Agency continues to screen around 3 million passengers on peak days. Around 95% of TSA employees are deemed essential and must continue working and protecting the traveling public during a shutdown, while not getting paid. Those 61,000 public servants live and work across the nation, working at over 430 commercial airports, within your communities, not getting paid for performing incredibly challenging and taxing jobs.

Many 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 just to get to work becomes very challenging, leading to increased unscheduled absences (call outs) as a shutdown progresses. Higher call outs can result in longer wait times at checkpoints, leading to missed or delayed flights, which has a cascading negative impact on the American economy.

During the recent 43-day shutdown, the TSA frontline workforce valiantly reported to work and kept our operations running smoothly, ensuring millions of passengers arrived at their destinations safely and securely. At the same time, they all felt the financial strain and stress of not knowing when paychecks were coming. Many in our workforce were subject to late fees and penalties for missed bill payments, eviction notices, loss of long-term childcare arrangements, and more. Some are just now recovering from the financial impact of the 43-day shutdown, while many are still reeling from it. We cannot put them through another such experience.

Additionally, shutdown and funding uncertainties have real and measurable impacts on recruitment, retention, and employee morale. Around 1,110 TSOs separated from TSA in October and November 2025, a more than 25% increase in TSO separations from the same time period in 2024. Many TSOs that left attributed their separation due to the uncertainty, stress, missed paychecks, and financial hardships of the government shutdown. Right now, the Agency is focused on surge staffing in March, April, and May, to be prepared for Spring Break, summer, and World Cup travel. Another shutdown would severely impact TSA's ability to meet these personnel needs.

Furthermore, a shutdown would impact TSA's technology deployment timelines. A shutdown would delay technology improvements and deployments, preventing us from giving our workforce the tools they need to do their jobs and carry out this mission, and our ability to handle year over year passenger volume growth, in addition to preparing for large world events. Without budget certainty, we are at risk of critical technology deployments being pushed even further out.

## **Conclusion**

We cannot forget our history and why this Agency was founded after 9/11, to prevent terrorist attacks on the Nation's transportation systems. On behalf of the TSA workforce, I urge Congress to pass the DHS budget and provide TSA with the funding certainty it needs to secure the U.S. transportation system. The Nation cannot afford the safety and security of the traveling public and U.S. transportation systems to be threatened by budget uncertainties. As we enter our 25<sup>th</sup> year as an agency, we must ensure TSA remains an employer of choice for those who want to serve our country and their communities.

Chairman Amodei, Ranking Member Cuellar, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, it is a privilege to testify before you today. Thank you for your support of TSA and I look forward to your questions.