



HOMELAND SECURITY COMMITTEE

Statement of Subcommittee Chairman John Katko (R-NY) Transportation and Protective Security Subcommittee

"The Future of the Transportation Security Administration"
February 2, 2017

Remarks as Prepared

I would like to welcome everyone to the Subcommittee on Transportation and Protective Security's first hearing of the 115th Congress. I am grateful to my constituents for giving me the opportunity and privilege to return to Congress and continue to Chair this important Subcommittee. This Committee has a proven track record of working together to advance long term, common sense strategic reforms to the Department of Homeland Security. While there may be divisions and discord elsewhere, here in this room, we all share an unshakable commitment to ensuring the security of the traveling public, because we know that the consequences of failure are too great.

The Transportation Security Administration was founded just weeks after 9/11. Congress did what it does best-it reacted to a crisis and threw money at a problem. Here we are nearly sixteen years later, the American taxpayer has spent billions of dollars, and it is clear that TSA is long overdue for an overhaul. The agency has long been plagued with uncertainty and a lack of leadership. Since 2014, TSA has had six different administrators leading the agency. While we have been able to advance legislation to address many of the challenges that TSA faces, it is incumbent upon us to provide clearer direction and intent for this often troubled agency in the form of a full scale reauthorization, and find a way to limit the revolving door of leadership. Without continuity at the top, it is impossible for any organization to successfully implement a long term strategic vision. Instead, we have all been left with the many fits and starts of the last few years.

Under former Administrator Neffenger, TSA began to move in the right direction. A new training and education program was put into place for all front-line employees, emphasis was placed on engagement with the private sector and TSA launched an Innovation Task Force to seek out new technologies. While these were important first steps, they did not go far enough, and now many of these potentially transformative initiatives are left to languish or disappear altogether with yet another change in leadership when the President names a new Administrator. It would be wise for the new Administrator to continue to build upon many of these positive changes initiated by Admiral Neffenger. When confirmed, he or she will have an eager partner in this Subcommittee, to help garner Congressional support for reform and improvement within the agency.

Over the last year, we saw record breaking numbers of Americans traveling; unfortunately TSA was ill-prepared for the volume of travelers and was caught flat footed. At the height of the wait times crisis, news coverage around the country showed passengers, stranded at airports overnight due to long TSA wait lines, sleeping on cots. The number of passengers will continue to increase, and we must ensure TSA is prepared to effectively and efficiently screen passengers.