

**Opening Statement of  
Chairwoman Sheila Jackson Lee (TX-18)  
Subcommittee on Transportation Security and  
Infrastructure Protection  
Committee on Homeland Security  
Markup of H.R. 2200, “Transportation Security Administration  
Authorization Act.”**

At the beginning of this Congress, Chairman Thompson stated that the Committee would be moving to pass authorizing legislation for the Department of Homeland Security.

The bill before us, the “Transportation Security Administration Authorization Act,” helps to further this important effort.

An authorization bill demonstrates a core constitutional function of Congress and lays important markers for the Executive Branch.

This bill will help to guide the efforts of the men and women who work to secure our skies, rail lines, and roads everyday, knowing they have the commitment of their elected representatives.

I am proud of the bipartisan manner in which this comprehensive TSA bill was crafted.

I am especially pleased that Mr. Dent is an original cosponsor of this legislation.

At this time, I would like to describe the underlying bill, which is the product of substantive findings of this Subcommittee as well as GAO and the Inspector General.

Chairman Thompson and Secretary Napolitano agreed at the beginning of this Congress that surface transportation security needed to be on equal footing with aviation at TSA. This bill furthers this important objective.

This bill acts on recommendations issued in 2008 by the Inspector General that were reaffirmed earlier this year, by establishing the Surface Transportation Security Inspection Office to house the surface transportation security inspection program, streamline its mission, and clarify its command structure.

Having a permanent home at TSA will encourage surface inspector morale and ensure that inspectors are no longer diverted to aviation activities.

In an effort to reach out more constructively to surface transportation security stakeholders, this bill creates the Surface Transportation Security Advisory Committee to give them a formal outlet for giving TSA feedback on security issues.

This subcommittee has heard many worthy criticisms about the dissemination of surface-transportation security grants. Accordingly, this bill has included language that will begin to improve the process.

This bill also directs GAO to study the efforts of the Department, its components, and other relevant entities to learn from foreign nations whose passenger rail and transit systems have been attacked by terrorists and assess “lessons learned” to address security gaps in the United States.

I am also proud of a bipartisan provision authorizing TSA to test and assess technologies aimed at securing underwater tunnels and passenger rail systems from terrorist attacks involving improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

In addition to the great strides this bill makes to secure our surface transportation systems, it also builds upon this subcommittee's efforts in the aviation security arena.

Earlier this year, the Inspector General confirmed that TSA has, in the past, compromised covert testing operations by issuing advance notices to individuals outside of the selected group who need to know about covert testing activity.

The bill prohibits advance notice of covert testing.

The bill also requires Airport Security Plans to include reporting procedures to ensure that the head TSA official at each airport is immediately notified whenever any Federal, State, or local law enforcement personnel are called to an aircraft at the gate or on the airfield.

The need to improve reporting procedures and communication among TSA and law enforcement officials was identified in the 2008 Inspector General report on security screening procedures at Orlando International Airport.

The bill also codifies the Aviation Security Advisory Committee ("ASAC") and requires it to perform specific actions and submit reports to the Assistant Secretary.

We have concerns about TSA's proposed rulemaking covering general aviation. In response, the bill establishes a general aviation security working group within the ASAC to provide stakeholder input and recommendations in these critical areas.

Additionally, section 210 creates a \$10 million grant program for improving security measures at general aviation airports, based upon recommendations from the General Aviation Working Group within the ASAC. This will help to ensure stakeholders have the voice and the resources to secure our general aviation aircraft.

The bill requires rigorous oversight of the Secure Flight passenger watchlist matching program by requiring updates to Congress every 90 days. The matching of passengers against the watchlist was a critical element highlighted in the 9/11 Commission Report and, after years of delay, TSA has finally begun to implement the Secure Flight program in 2009.

In a provision based upon what we have learned through our oversight activities, the bill requires the Secretary to develop a strategic plan for the certification and integration of technologies for transportation security.

The legislation also requires GAO to report to Congress on how TSA has utilized stimulus funding for explosives detection equipment. We are happy to have worked in a bipartisan manner to have this language included.

This bill does a great deal to protect the people of the United States and the transportation systems at the foundation of our economy and society. We should be proud of this legislation, as it is testament to our responsibility to keep the American people safe.

I look forward to continuing our bipartisan work today as we mark up this authorization bill.