



One Hundred Tenth Congress  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on Homeland Security  
Washington, DC 20515  
July 18, 2008

The Honorable David Price  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Homeland Security  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Harold Rogers  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Homeland Security  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Price and Ranking Member Rogers:

In concept, the Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC) should provide greater infrastructure protection by utilizing biometrics recorded on the card to verify the identities of individuals working at our ports, and eventually other transportation facilities. For this heightened level of security to be realized, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) must move forward with deploying card readers that can validate a worker's identity at access points to secure areas.

Congress mandated in the SAFE Ports Act of 2006 (P.L. 109-347) that TSA undertake at least five card reader pilots across the country. As you know, ports that volunteered to participate in these pilots, pilots designed to benefit the TWIC program and not the ports directly, received grant funds. Unfortunately, the Department of Homeland Security mandated that these ports contribute a twenty-five percent cost share to the total cost of the project. We supported the approach you took in the Fiscal Year 2008 Consolidated Appropriations Act (P.L. 110-161) to set aside \$6.1 million for the local match requirement. Waiving the cost sharing requirement for the five card reader pilot locations was the right thing to do. Reprogramming these funds, as TSA is now proposing, would impede progress on the card reader pilots and potentially undermine the success of the pilot.

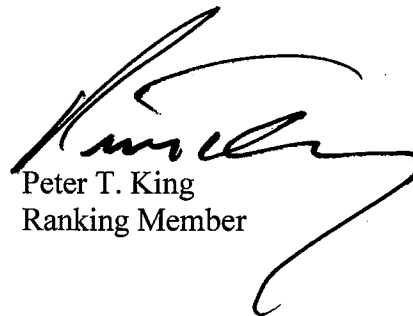
We believe that TSA's request to reprogram the money ignores Congress' mandate. As stated in the FY 2008 Consolidated Appropriations Act, the \$6.1 million was appropriated to fund the cost-share requirement and it should go directly to the ports. If TSA now needs additional funds to complete the pilot, such funds should be requested as appropriations, but not at the expense of the ports that will undertake the pilots.

As you know, the ports involved in the TWIC reader pilot oppose the reprogramming. We received a copy of a recent letter sent by the American Association of Port Authorities to Secretary Chertoff outlining the ports' opposition to this request. They are concerned that if this proposal is accepted, their participation and the ultimate value of the pilot will be severely limited. We share their concerns.

We look forward to working with you on this issue. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Rosaline Cohen, Chief Counsel, Committee on Homeland Security, 202 226-2616 or Sterling Marchand, Republican Professional Staff, Committee on Homeland Security, 202-226-8417.

Sincerely,

  
Bennie G. Thompson  
Chairman

  
Peter T. King  
Ranking Member