



Committee on
HOMELAND SECURITY
Chairman Peter T. King

Opening Statement

February 7, 2012

Media Contact: Shane Wolfe

(202) 226-8417

**Statement of Chairman Mike Rogers (R-AL)
Subcommittee on Transportation Security**

**"Screening Partnership Program: Why is a Job-Creating,
Public-Private Partnership Meeting Resistance at TSA?"**

**February 7, 2012
Remarks as Prepared**

I would like to welcome everyone to this important hearing and thank our witnesses for being here.

Today, the subcommittee will examine the Screening Partnership Program and TSA's willingness to work with the private sector to improve transportation security.

Let me state first and foremost that I am a strong supporter of the Screening Partnership Program, or S-P-P. I was disappointed with TSA's decision last January to not expand the program beyond the existing 16 airports utilizing private screening services. I am aware that last week TSA approved one airport but denied two others from participating in SPP.

Limiting SPP's growth is the wrong approach in my opinion, especially since both TSA and GAO have determined that the performance of federal screeners and private screeners are roughly the same, and that the security standards set for SPP and non-SPP airports are completely identical.

Rather than trying to insulate a giant federal workforce, TSA should be working to strengthen and improve the private screening program and make it more cost-efficient so that U.S. businesses can take on a more meaningful role. Then, TSA could concentrate on implementing the management, oversight, contracting, procurement, AND training reforms it desperately needs.

Instead of dealing with trivial workforce-related issues like 'someone stole my lunch' and 'when do I get my break?' - not to mention the time-consuming investigations when a screener is accused of theft, TSA personnel at headquarters and in the field could focus more of their attention on preventing the next terrorist attack before it occurs. Imagine that.

Last April, the Full Committee Chairman and I introduced H.R. 1586, the "Security Enhancement and Jobs Act of 2011." The bill requires TSA to approve any SPP application that would not compromise security, and provide a written explanation to Congress and the airport concerned, if an SPP application is denied.

I am pleased that language similar to our bill was included in the FAA Reauthorization Conference Report, which recently passed the House.

In addition, the huge number of TSA personnel working at airports that do have private screeners troubles me. Recent data provided to the Committee reveals that at certain airports where contractors do the screening and TSA is just there to oversee the screening process, there are upwards of 50 TSA employees on the payroll.

While we can all agree that strong oversight in this area is critically important, having 50-plus TSA officials at a single airport where they are not responsible for conducting any screening is just plain overkill and it's costing the taxpayer huge amounts of money. We will look at this issue, and other contracting and management issues throughout this hearing.

I look forward to all of the witness testimony.