

**Statement of Ranking Member Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX)
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Transportation Security
Committee on Homeland Security**

**“Authorizing the Transportation Security Administration for Fiscal Years 2012 and
2013”**

June 2, 2011

TSA’s scope of responsibility is broad and its mission in securing transportation against terrorist attack is critical to the Nation’s overall homeland security efforts.

Over the past several years this subcommittee has evaluated cargo security on passenger planes, passenger and baggage screening technology and processes, security at foreign repair stations, general aviation security, the Registered Traveler program, and the administration of TSA’s programs for surface transportation security.

We understand and support a layered approach to security, whereby if one security protocol fails, there will be others to mitigate the terrorist threat.

As we move forward in this authorization process we must not forget this basic homeland security tenet. Furthermore, it is important to remember that our last line of defense, the final layer against the terrorist threat, is not technology but people.

These people are our Federal Air Marshals, who have been authorized to protect the cockpit and secure the aircraft cabin in emergency. These people are the flight attendants who in just the last few months have subdued several unruly passengers in separate in-flight events. These are the people we must invest in – authorizing criminal investigative training for FAMS and recurrent advanced self defense training for flight attendants.

Our pilots, including the Federal Flight Deck Officer participants, are critical. Behind the hardened cockpit doors authorized after the 9/11 attacks, they not only are operating the aircraft but providing yet another line of defense. We need to ensure they have the resources in the FFDO program to support their mission.

And outside the aircraft, our people on the front lines are the Transportation Security Officers who screen 2 million passengers a day. For these TSOs, we need to afford them excellent training and career advancement opportunities to complement the collective bargaining which they are currently voting on.

Mr. Chairman, I know from my discussions with you, that we share the same commitment to securing our Nation’s transportation systems.

In particular, we have discussed the importance of focusing on securing mass transit and other surface modes of transportation. Recent history in Russia, Spain and the United Kingdom has shown that surface transportation is a terrorist target, and we know from the Bin Laden raid that al-Qaeda is looking at exploiting vulnerabilities in our rail and mass transit systems.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you again for your commitment to working with this side of the aisle so that we can approach these issues in a comprehensive manner.

We had broad, bipartisan support for our TSA authorization bill in the last Congress, and I hope you will look at some of those provisions, particularly on surface transportation security, and include them in this year’s measure.