

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

Hearing: “TSA Reform: Exploring Innovations in Technology Procurement to Stimulate Job Growth Part Two”

October 13, 2011

Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding today’s hearing. I know from our discussions, that we share the same commitment to securing our Nation’s transportation systems.

I understand that today’s hearing is the second hearing in this series. I look forward to receiving testimony from today’s witnesses and hope that the third hearing—which will contain government witnesses will provide insight on the practices of this Administration.

Today, we will hear from members of the Business Community.

I want to first welcome Mr. Guy Ben Ari, Deputy Director of the Defense Industrial Initiatives Group at the Center for Strategic and International Studies - an important think tank.

At the September hearing, we heard from former Homeland Security Officials. They testified about the need for greater cooperation between business and government in developing contract requirements for major research projects.

While this is an interesting thought, as you know, the Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR) have strict rules about the depth and breadth of permissible discussions between government and industry prior to the announcement of a contracting opportunity.

I think the last hearing also made clear that this Administration has given some thought and taken some action on how TSA and S&T can improve their collaboration.

We in the Congress need to support and encourage efforts to assure that government is more efficient and genuinely meets the needs of its customers—the American taxpayer.

Unfortunately, the current budgetary atmosphere makes a strong and robust research and development agenda unlikely.

TSA and the Science and Technology Directorate at DHS are tasked with the critical mission of developing, evaluating, and delivering technologies to improve transportation security.

Their job is to increase public safety.

Given the risks to our aviation and mass transit sectors, DHS must be able to integrate effective security technology into our transportation security programs. However, new solutions to old problems seldom come without costs.

Mr. Chairman, at this point, we must ask, what cost are we willing to pay? We should not be afraid to spend dollars if we can save lives. However, because my colleagues on the other side of the aisle have proposed to slash the Department’s budget below the President’s FY 12 request, I have little hope that the progress in research and development will continue.