

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson*****Has TSA met the Deadline to Provide Expedited Screening to Military Service Members?***

July 11, 2012 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Transportation Security subcommittee hearing entitled “Has TSA met the Deadline to Provide Expedited Screening to Military Service Members?”:

“I am pleased that officials from both the Transportation Security Administration and the Department of Defense could join us today to discuss TSA’s process for screening Members of the Armed Services. The Democratic Members of this Committee have long supported the concept of expedited screening for the brave men and women who serve to protect our Nation.

I was proud to lend my support to the proposal that became the Public Law we are here to discuss today – both last Congress when it was offered by Representative Bachus as an amendment to the TSA Authorization bill and this Congress when it was introduced by the Gentleman from Minnesota. By expediting screening for members of our Armed Services and providing gate passes for their loved ones, as TSA’s policy allows, we honor their service.

Fortunately, TSA has had the authority necessary to make common sense adjustments to its screening policies for certain populations. Just last year, TSA announced refinements to its process for screening children and the elderly.

TSA still has much work to do to enhance its reputation and improve the perception held by the general public. Employing expedited screening policies for low-risk populations such as children, the elderly, and members of the military will help to change the perception that TSA policies fail the common sense test.

And, because many in this body have indicated a desire to eliminate TSA, I believe that when the agency employs measures that make sense and do not jeopardize the nation’s security, we should recognize and acknowledge those actions.

Today, I would like to highlight a few of the changes TSA has made under the leadership of Administrator Pistole. TSA has worked with the Honor Flight Network to improve our veterans’ experiences as they fly from points around the Nation to visit D.C. and the memorials built in their honor.

TSA operates a program specifically designed to ensure that the screening of our Wounded Warriors is conducted in an efficient and dignified manner. And finally, TSA honors our veterans by giving them employment opportunities. Veterans comprise approximately one quarter of TSA’s workforce. Whenever I go through security at an airport I am mindful that one in four of the TSOs staffing that checkpoint may have risked his life for this country.

Before closing Mr. Chairman, I would like to point out that we still have five months left to do the people’s work during this Congress. I hope that in the coming months, we can look forward to what we should do instead of examining what we have done. As someone once said, don’t look back—that is not where you will find your future. As we look to this Committee’s future, I hope we will use the time remaining in this Congress to take up difficult issues such as a TSA Authorization bill.”

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