

Prepared Floor Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)

In Opposition to FAA Extension

July 11, 2016

Before I begin, I would like to express my condolences to families affected by the violence in recent weeks.

Today, the pain that is felt by families in Dallas, Baton Rouge, Falcon Heights, and Orlando is reverberating across the country.

Americans are looking to this body to show leadership and make the Nation safer.

With just four days remaining before Members return to their districts for the summer, time is of the essence.

I do not accept the notion that nothing can be done to address the availability of military-style firearms to individuals with intent to do harm.

This is the United States of America. We rebuilt Europe after the Second World War, landed a man on the moon, and invented the Internet. Surely, we can come together on commonsense gun safety and security measures.

Turning to the legislation before us today, while I commend Mr. DeFazio and his colleagues for negotiating language to enhance aviation safety, I must rise in opposition to this legislation.

My problem with the bill stems from a potential-job-killing provision inserted in the homeland security portion of the package.

Understandably, after the airport attacks in Brussels and, more recently, Istanbul, there is interest in strengthening aviation security.

Section 3405 directs TSA to update regulations for eligibility, including disqualifying offenses, for SIDA airport credentials, which airport worker need to perform their jobs.

There is no evidence that this additional scrutiny would strengthen aviation security.

What we do know, for sure, is that the changes would unjustifiably put workers at risk of losing their jobs.

As such, it should come as no surprise, that, the International Association of Machinists, the Communications Workers of America, and the Transportation Workers Union have come out in strong opposition to bill.

Earlier this Congress, the Committee on Homeland Security worked diligently with stakeholders to develop language directing TSA to review the adequacy of the ten-year lookback period and disqualifying offenses for the SIDA credential program.

That measure, H.R. 3102, was approved by voice vote in the House, this past October.

The language before us today goes several steps further than H.R. 3102, unjustifiably lengthening the well-litigated ten-year lookback period from 10 to 15 years, absent any evidence that doing so is necessary to address the threat of terrorism.

The men and women that will be subject to this arbitrary change have as strong, if not more, of an interest as you or me in preventing terrorism in airports.

They deserve better than living in fear that they will be lose their job in the name of homeland security.