

***Opening Statement – Ranking Member Cedric L. Richmond (D-LA)
Subcommittee on Transportation Security***

For Hearing “Stakeholder Perspectives on TSA Acquisition Reform”

July 17, 2013

Thank you for holding this important stakeholder hearing on TSA’s acquisition practices. Soliciting input from stakeholders is critical to developing effective policies. Over the past several months, we have all emphasized this point to TSA time and again. I am pleased that today we are practicing what we preach.

Back in May, we heard about the extensive challenges TSA continues to face in developing, acquiring, and deploying security-related technology. We also heard from TSA regarding the agency’s failure to meet its small business contracting goals. Today, we have the opportunity to move beyond focusing on past failings and to instead focus on how we can help get TSA on the right track.

We all have the same goal. That is, to ensure that TSA is a prudent steward of the taxpayer dollars as it fosters the development of new technologies that will support the agency’s mission. To accomplish this, TSA must have a clear vision of its long-term technology needs. It must work with industry to make its vision a reality.

In addition to better long-term planning, TSA would benefit from greater partnership with innovative small businesses.

Today, far too often we see promising homeland security technologies go undeveloped because small businesses often lack the capital to undertake the expensive and time-consuming process of getting the technology tested.

We should look at whether there are some best practices elsewhere in the Federal government that could be employed here to address this major barrier to working with TSA. Broadly speaking, I look forward to hearing from each of the witnesses present today on ways they believe TSA’s acquisition practices can be improved.

Particularly, I look forward to hearing how improvements can be made that foster consistency and compliance with Federal acquisition regulations and Department-wide directives.

In TSA’s short history, we’ve seen when it comes to administrative matters – be they personnel or procurement – TSA does not do “novel” well.

That is why Congress acted to subject TSA to the Federal Acquisition Regulation in 2007. I do believe that technology acquisition by TSA is an area ripe for more robust transparency and accountability. Implementing such reforms will be beneficial for both stakeholders and taxpayers alike.

Before yielding back Mr. Chairman, I would like to commend you on the bipartisan approach you have taken to the issue of TSA acquisitions and potential reforms. Your willingness to address issues regarding TSA’s lackluster performance as it relates to small business contracting is appreciated.