



**Statement of Subcommittee Chairman John Katko (R-NY)  
Transportation Security Subcommittee**

*“Long Lines, Short Patience: Local Perspectives”  
May 26, 2016*

Remarks as Prepared

As the summer holiday season approaches, we are in the midst of a crisis at our airports. American families are planning to enjoy their time off traveling to points near and far. As they begin their journeys, they will arrive at airports around the country only to be confronted with longer and longer lines at TSA security checkpoints, causing some to return home after missing their flights and stranding others to take up temporary residence at the airport, on a cot, like we saw in Chicago a few weeks ago.

Unfortunately, this is not an isolated incident and this committee continues to receive reports from around the country describing delays at TSA checkpoints in excess of two (2) hours. On Good Friday, March 25th, six hundred (600) passengers missed their flights, at the Charlotte-Douglas International Airport, due to an apparent lack of TSA manpower and checkpoint inefficiencies. In fact, the airport was nearly forced to affect a ground stoppage—a literal standstill of air traffic—due to delays at the checkpoint. This is wholly unacceptable and I, along with the American taxpayer, expect the security at America’s airports to be streamlined, effective and efficient.

This committee has worked tirelessly with TSA to ensure they have the manpower and technology they need to operate checkpoints at optimal levels. While TSA realized there would be an issue, and communicated to the American public that increased wait times should be expected at our nation’s airports as we enter the high travel seasons, they did not have a clear picture of the resources they would need to tackle this problem. The TSA FY17 budget request did not account for any of the increases in overtime or staffing that they are now requesting to meet their basic screening function. It wasn’t until widespread media reports of passengers on cots and excessive wait times, that TSA made the decision to request to reallocate assets to help combat the issue. I am growing increasingly frustrated that TSA needs constant prodding to effect positive changes at the agency.

This committee has passed several pieces of bipartisan legislation that would go a long way to improve the overall security of airports as well as improving checkpoint optimization, but the Senate refuses to expedite passage of these important bills. For example, my TSA Precheck bill would require TSA to expand and aggressively market the program, thereby, increasing the number of trusted travelers into the system, diverting them into the Precheck checkpoints and alleviating the stress on the general public checkpoints. However, due to typical Washington antics, this bill amongst others remains stalled.

When I came to Congress I made a commitment to my constituents to tackle problems head on and get things done. Last week, this Subcommittee convened representatives from airports and airlines from across this country to discuss this wait time crisis and hear directly from them what they think needs to be done to help. The message was consistent; TSA needs to collaborate with individual airlines and airport authorities

to coordinate sufficient staffing levels on a local basis. I have heard your message, and later today, I will introduce the "Checkpoint Optimization and Efficiency Act of 2016," which will require TSA to maximize all of their available resources and give airports and airlines a seat at the table, to ensure those resources are being utilized and allocated in the most effective and efficient manner.

Make no mistake, security is first and foremost. Those that wish to do us harm continue to plot against the aviation community and we must be ready to confront them at every turn. But TSA has to find a way to maintain security while fulfilling its duty to keep passengers safely moving through the system. TSA has to be forward leaning and creative to address obstacles as they present themselves.

I would like to thank our witnesses for taking time out of their busy schedules and making multiple trips, on short notice, to Washington to aid us in solving this problem. I am lucky, the Syracuse Hancock International Airport, which I fly in and out of each week, is a well-oiled machine compared to the horror stories we heard at last week's roundtable discussion on checkpoint efficiency, and I have Christina Callahan to thank for that.

I would like to thank all of you for being here today and I look forward to hearing your perspective on the best and most effective way forward.

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