



## HOMELAND SECURITY COMMITTEE

### Statement of Subcommittee Chairman John Katko (R-NY) Transportation and Protective Security Subcommittee

*“The Public Face of TSA: Examining the Agency’s Outreach and Traveler Engagement Efforts”*

February 27, 2018

Remarks as Prepared

The Subcommittee is meeting today to examine TSA’s efforts to effectively engage with the traveling public in a manner that is positive, respectful, and leads to the success of the agency’s mission to secure aviation security from threats.

For most Americans, TSA is the most visible component of the Department of Homeland Security and the only DHS component with which they regularly interact. By screening over 2 million passengers per day, TSA is constantly interacting with a diverse array of individuals—all of whom are worthy of the utmost respect, efficiency, and security.

Over the course of its history, TSA has had to—at times—swiftly implement new security measures in response to changing threats. Other times, the agency has sought to gradually adjust operations to improve effectiveness and efficiencies. In both cases, TSA has often struggled to communicate clearly to the traveling public.

Lack of stakeholder engagement has led to confusion among travelers, airports, air carriers, and even TSA’s own frontline personnel. For example, in recent months, TSA began implementing new screening procedures for passenger’s accessible property at the checkpoint. This new procedure, called Enhanced Accessible Property Screening, or EAPS, was met with some confusion and frustration, as travelers did not understand the reasoning behind TSA’s new procedures.

The reality is that the success of TSA’s mission rises and falls on the agency’s ability to consistently apply proven security measures across the aviation system. This cannot be done without soliciting the public’s feedback, identifying and responding to the traveling public’s needs, and learning how to effectively communicate with the traveling public.

While TSA has, indeed, struggled in terms of communicating security information, the agency has experienced a measure of success in leveraging the power of social media to engage travelers. For example, TSA’s own Instagram account has nearly a million followers and has been heralded by media outlets across the country for its interesting and—at times—even comical content.

This account helps raise public awareness on aviation security surrounding explosives trace detection canines, prohibited items, checkpoint processes, and TSA PreCheck. TSA’s social media

presence has been called one of the best in the federal government, and plays an important role in communicating information to travelers. Additionally, TSA's own AskTSA initiative has greatly improved the public's ability to quickly and easily ask questions about what items they can or cannot bring in their carry-on or checked baggage.

TSA has also made improvements through its TSA Cares program, which allows passengers to call ahead and arrange for assistance at the security checkpoint, in order to minimize confusion and improve the experience for passengers who may need extra help navigating checkpoint processes and procedures. These methods for improving public engagement go a long way in transforming the passenger experience into one that is less stressful, and yet, more secure.

It is incumbent upon TSA to view the traveling public as partners in security, and leverage that partnership in a manner that is collaborative and positive. I look forward to hearing what TSA is doing to further make improvements in public engagement, while protective passenger's civil rights and liberties and respecting everyone with whom TSA personnel interact.

While passenger experiences with TSA should be positive from a public service perspective, at the end of the day, effective public engagement has a direct impact on security and TSA mission to protect transportation.

We cannot stay ahead of evolving threats or ensure the free movement of goods and people without effectively engaging traveling Americans and keeping them aware of the importance of TSA's mission. The key drivers of this must be mutual communication, cooperation, and respect. I thank the witnesses for agreeing to appear before the Subcommittee today, and I look forward to your testimony.

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