

LONG LINES, SHORT PATIENCE: LOCAL PERSPECTIVES

HEARING BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION SECURITY OF THE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH CONGRESS SECOND SESSION

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LONG LINES, SHORT PATIENCE: LOCAL PERSPECTIVES

Thursday, May 26, 2016

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION SECURITY,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 9:08 a.m., in Room 311, Cannon House Office Building, Hon. John Katko [Chairman of the subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Katko, Carter, and Payne.

Also present: Representatives McSally and Jackson Lee.

Mr. KATKO. The Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Transportation Security, will come to order.

A bit of housekeeping before we proceed. I ask unanimous consent that the gentlewoman from Arizona, Ms. McSally, be allowed to sit on the dais and participate in this hearing.

Without objection, so ordered.

The subcommittee is meeting today to better understand the root causes of increased passenger wait times and gain local perspectives on this important issue.

I now recognize myself for an opening statement.

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, business men and women are doing the same that they do all year round, and the added crush of the travel season, leisure season, is causing particular problems.

As they begin their journeys, they will arrive at airports around the country only to be confronted with longer and longer lines at many airports at TSA 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 2 hours. On Good Friday, March 25, 600 passengers missed their flights at the Charlotte Douglas International Airport due to an apparent lack of TSA manpower and checkpoint inefficiencies. In fact, that airport was nearly forced to effect a ground stoppage, a literal standstill of air traffic, due to delays at the checkpoint.

This is wholly unacceptable. 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 that the manpower and technology they need to operate checkpoints at optimal levels is there.

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 and clearly were not prepared for it.

The TSA fiscal year 2017 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, which is completely unacceptable, and excessive wait times that TSA made the decision to request to reallocate assets to help combat the issue.

I, my colleagues on this committee, and Ms. McSally are 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 towards improving the overall security of airports, as well as improving checkpoint optimization. But the Senate refused to expedite passage of these important bills, standing on principle or some esoteric theory about how the agency should be run. In short, they are trying to polish the brass while the fire bell is ringing.

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 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 just get things done. Last week, the subcommittee convened representatives from airports and airlines from across this country to discuss this wait time crisis and hear directly from them about what they think needs to be done to help. It was a very productive meeting, and it gave me faith that the process in Congress can and does work sometimes.

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. They have the capa-

bility to do it. TSA has to be forward-leaning and creative to address obstacles as they present themselves, just like all of us do in our daily jobs.

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, honored, and fortunate to have the Syracuse International Airport, which I fly in and out of each week, as the well-oiled machine that it is, compared to the horror stories we heard at last week's roundtable discussion on checkpoint efficiency. I have Christina Callahan, one of the witnesses here, 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.

[The statement of Chairman Katko follows:]

STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN JOHN KATKO

MAY 26, 2016

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 2 hours. On Good Friday, March 25, 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 fiscal year 2017 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 wide-spread 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.

Mr. KATKO. With that, I now recognize the Ranking Member of the subcommittee, the gentleman from New Jersey, Mr. Payne, for his opening statement. I like those glasses.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I wore them just for you.

Mr. KATKO. Go orange.

Mr. PAYNE. Yeah, right.

I would also like to thank you for holding this hearing.

It is good that we are having this hearing immediately following the full committee hearing with Administrator Neffenger yesterday.

Recently, wait times have been a major cause of concern within our Nation's airports. Last week, for example, due to extreme wait times, the Transportation Security Administration reallocated resources to Chicago Midway International Airport and Newark Liberty Airport to decrease the length of screening lines.

While I am pleased that TSOs are being given the opportunity to be converted to full-time and the administration has taken steps to address the problem in the interim, we need to find a viable long-term solution to this problem. Reallocating, or taking one airport's resources and giving it to another, will only fix the problem temporarily.

For the summer travel period, TSA predicted that nearly 740 million individuals will use commercial aviation travel, which happens to be the most air travelers this country has ever seen. In contrast, TSOs, who are responsible for screening passengers and baggage, are at some of the lowest numbers we have seen in years.

This is due in large part to limited resources. Under former Administrator Pistole, the agency pivoted to risk-based security, a frame of mind that we focus our resources on individuals who we know less about, and rightfully so.

However, this methodology also came with programs that were not sustainable due to security risk, such as Managed Inclusion 2, which has since ceased. Although they are still using a risk-based approach, it does not take away from the fact that the amount of officers, when compared to the number of people traveling, is insufficient.

Last week, the Subcommittee on Transportation Security held a roundtable discussion with the airports, and many important things were discussed. There were general agreements that BDOs could be used in other roles throughout the screener model. Yesterday, we learned TSA agrees and supports the Federal security directors having the flexibility to use BDOs in different ways.

We also heard concern on whether or not Federal security directors had enough flexibility to operate as necessary checkpoints with staffing. The administrator testified yesterday that he believed that they always had such flexibility and that he worked to ensure that they knew that they had this flexibility.

Now we get to hear more perspectives from stakeholders who are intimately involved with the commercial aviation and airlines and airports themselves. Today I look forward to hearing what your experiences throughout this issue have been, as well as how you view the steps that are being taken.

I would also like to thank President Cox from AFGE for being here to serve as the voice of the workforce. TSOs represent the front line in our efforts to secure the commercial aviation sector. They do an outstanding job screening passengers and their belongings, and often unfairly receive the majority of the blame for this issue. Their perspective is absolutely vital in this conversation.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you, and I yield back the balance of my time.

[The statement of Hon. Payne follows:]

STATEMENT OF RANKING MEMBER DONALD M. PAYNE, JR.

MAY 26, 2016

Recently, wait times have been a major cause for concern within our Nation's airports. Last week for example, due to extreme wait times, the Transportation Security Administration reallocated resources to Chicago-Midway International Airport and Newark Liberty Airport—to decrease the length of screening lines.

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However, this methodology also came with programs that were not sustainable due to security risks, such as Managed Inclusion 2, which has since ceased. Although they are still using a risk-based approach, it does not take away from the fact that the amount of travelers, when compared to the number of people traveling, is insufficient.

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We also heard concern on whether or not Federal Security Directors had enough flexibility to operate as necessary with checkpoint staffing. The administrator testified yesterday that he believed that they always had such flexibility, and that he worked to ensure that they knew that they had this flexibility.

Now, we get to hear more perspectives from stakeholders who are intimately involved with commercial aviation and airlines and the airports themselves. Today, I look forward to hearing what your experiences throughout this issue have been, as well as how you view the steps that are being taken by the administration, and in some instances, yourselves, to address wait times.

I would also like to thank President Cox from AFGE for being here to serve as the voice of the workforce. TSOs represent the front line in our efforts to secure the commercial aviation sector. They do an outstanding job screening passengers and

their belongings, and often unfairly receive the majority of the blame for this issue. Their perspective is absolutely vital in this conversation.

Mr. KATKO. Thank you, Mr. Payne.

Other Members of the committee are reminded that opening statements may be submitted for the record.

We are pleased to have a very distinguished panel here to testify before us today on this very important topic. Christina Callahan serves as executive director for Syracuse Hancock International Airport in Syracuse, New York. Ms. Bonnie Allin is president and CEO of the Tucson Airport in Tucson, Arizona. Ms. Lydia Beirsto serves as managing deputy commissioner for security in the department of aviation for the city of Chicago. Ms. Kerry Philipovitch, senior vice president for customer service at American Airlines. Mr. David Cox, National president of the American Federation of Government Employees.

Thank you all for being here today.

I now recognize Ms. Christina Callahan for an opening statement.

STATEMENT OF CHRISTINA R. CALLAHAN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SYRACUSE HANCOCK INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, SYRACUSE, NEW YORK

Ms. CALLAHAN. Thank you. Good morning. Chairman Katko and Ranking Member Payne, and to the other Members of the Transportation Security Committee, thank you. Thank you for inviting us to today's hearing on an issue that requires both immediate attention and long-term sustainable solutions: How to handle growing lines at TSA checkpoints at airports across the country while maintaining the high standards for passenger and baggage screening we need in order to keep the flying public safe.

Syracuse International Airport is a small commercial hub serving 2 million passengers annually, providing cargo and general aviation services to central New York. It employs hundreds of people and is a vital component of our economy. As an origination and destination airport, we serve 17 direct markets and we are the departure point for 1 million outbound passengers every year.

While Syracuse has not experienced the recent increased long security checkpoint times, we are part of a National transportation system that links our passengers to the airports represented here today, and working towards a solution as we enter one of the busiest travel seasons in the year is as important to Syracuse as it is to my fellow airports. What I hope to offer today, in addition to echoing my fellow airports' concerns, are examples of the steps we have taken to address our issues at home.

Ensuring the security and safety of the flying public, employees, and other airport users is the top priority for airports. Above all else, we are entrusted by the traveling public to provide safe and secure air transportation. Checkpoint wait times that exceed an hour or longer at some of our Nation's busiest airports have negative impacts on all elements of the air transportation system. Passengers are frustrated, taking their frustrations out on TSA, airport, and airline employees. The anxiety caused by concern over missing a flight, or even worse, missing that flight, creates an environment that is already challenged and difficult.

Several factors have been identified that have contributed to the checkpoint wait time issues. They include no increase in the number of Transportation Security Officers between fiscal years 2015 and 2016, the high rate of TSO attrition followed by the lengthy process to hire new TSOs, record growth in passenger traffic and lagging numbers in PreCheck enrollment. Combined, they have created a perfect storm that has led to recent events.

Working together, the airports, TSA, the airlines, and industry advocates have identified short- and long-term recommendations that focus on key areas, including the need for sufficient TSA staffing, increased PreCheck enrollment and participation, and the continued need to modernize airport infrastructure. We do not, however, support the imposition of any new passenger fees. Rather, we believe that the portion of the 9/11 passenger security fees that are currently being used to pay for other Government programs should be used to fund TSA.

Let me talk about PreCheck for just a moment. Chairman Katko was at the airport last November when we unveiled the TSA enrollment center in Syracuse. PreCheck has proven to be very successful at our airports. Currently, almost 40 percent of the flying public is enrolled in PreCheck.

While we believe that this is the result of having an enrollment center in the terminal, our efforts to educate the public on the benefits of PreCheck have been very important. While seemingly insignificant, the airport's role in incentivizing people to enroll in PreCheck by giving them free parking has resulted in the increased numbers of people enrolling. While not all airports are in a position to offer incentives, we have found that it has encouraged enough people to come out and spend an hour and enroll in PreCheck.

I would be remiss if I did not bring up the need to modernize airport infrastructure. We have spent time and money improving our airport, consolidating our checkpoint into one central checkpoint, to introduce efficiencies at every level. A central checkpoint was designed to bring the physical screening of passengers and baggage in alignment. It improved passenger and baggage screening at several levels. It allowed for the introduction of new screening equipment, consolidated TSA resources into one, and it has allowed us to implement new security requirements, such as the screening of all concession employees.

We have also been on the cutting edge of security by installing automated exit portals. These automated exit portals allow passengers and employees to exit the concourses safely and securely, without—preventing re-entry. It also eliminates the need to staff the exit lanes, thus saving the airport money and reducing the human error element. Let me stress that this project would not have been possible without the use of the airport's passenger facility charges.

To place the blame solely on TSA is unfair and not a solution to the problem. Rather, we must work together to address the major underlying issues before you today.

In closing, I would like to offer my gratitude to Chairman Katko and to the other Members of the subcommittee for taking the time to listen to our concerns. Thank you for inviting us and for your

continued commitment to the safety and security of airports and the people who use them every day.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Callahan follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CHRISTINA R. CALLAHAN

MAY 26, 2016

Good morning Chairman Katko and Ranking Member Rice and the other Members of the Transportation Security Subcommittee. Thank you for inviting us to today's hearing on an issue that requires both immediate attention and long-term, sustainable solutions—how to handle growing lines at TSA checkpoints at airports across the country.

Syracuse Hancock International Airport is a small commercial hub, serving 2 million passengers annually, providing air cargo and general aviation services to the Central New York region, employing hundreds of people, and is a vital component of the economic engine that drives the success of our community. The airport is located in Onondaga County, in approximately the geographic center of New York State and is a joint use facility along with the 174th Attack Wing of the New York Air National Guard.

While Syracuse has not experienced the recent increasing long security checkpoint times, we are part of a National air transportation system that links our passengers to the airports represented here today and working towards a solution as we near one of our busiest travel seasons in the year, as is important to us as it is to my fellow airport representatives.

Ensuring the safety and security of the flying public, employees, and other airport users is the top priority for airports. Above all else, we are entrusted by the traveling public to provide safe and secure air transportation. Checkpoint wait times that exceed an hour or longer at some of our Nation's busiest airports, have negative impacts on all elements of the air transportation system. Passengers are frustrated, taking their frustrations out on TSA, airline, and airport employees; the anxiety caused by concern over missing a flight, or even worse, actually missing that flight, creates unease and unrest among all airport users.

Several factors have been identified that have contributed to the checkpoint wait time issues. They include no increase in the number of Transportation Security Officers between fiscal years 2015 and 2016; the high rate of TSA attrition followed by the lengthy process to hire new TSOs; record growth in passenger traffic, and lagging numbers in PreCheck enrollment. Combined, they created a perfect storm of events that led to recent events.

We have identified short-term and long-term recommendations that focus on key areas including the need for sufficient TSA staffing, increased PreCheck enrollment and participation, and the continued need to modernize airport infrastructure. We do not support the imposition of new passenger fees, rather we believe that the portion of the 9/11 passenger security fees that are currently being used to pay for other Government programs, should be used to fund TSA.

PreCheck has proven to be very successful at SYR. Currently, almost 40% of passengers flying out of SYR are enrolled in PreCheck. We believe that this is the result of having an enrollment center in the terminal, our efforts to educate the public on the benefits of PreCheck, and while seemingly insignificant, the airport's offer to validate parking for PreCheck applicants. PreCheck customers bring their receipt to the airport's administration office after submitting their application and we validate their parking ticket. It is an incentive for people to make that appointment, drive to the airport, and enroll in PreCheck. While not all airports are in a position to offer free parking, we have found that it is enough of an incentive to get people to enroll in PreCheck.

I would be remiss if I did not bring up the need to modernize airport infrastructure. Airports, like Syracuse, were not built to meet the demands of today's security requirements. Prior to 2013, Syracuse was in the same position many airports find themselves in today. Long lines, missed flights, and angry passengers. We decided to do something about it, and committed our PFCs through 2027 for the Passenger Terminal Security Improvements Project. We built a new, second-level central checkpoint which was designed to bring both the physical screening of passengers and baggage in alignment with current-day security requirements, and it also allowed for expansion and implementation of future screening requirements. The new centralized security checkpoint has improved passenger and baggage screening at several levels; new screening equipment including advanced imaging technology, implementation of TSA PreCheck; improved customer service by consolidating TSA re-

sources into one, centralized location; and the ability to implement new security requirements, such as the requirement to screen all concession employees.

Following completion of the centralized security checkpoint, the airport reconfigured the checkpoints located at the entrance of each concourse as passenger exit points, which had previously been used for passenger and baggage screening, as the exits for passengers leaving the secure area. The airport then installed automated exit portals in each concourse. The automated exit portals allow passengers and employees to exit the secure area safely, while at the same preventing people from accessing the secure area. The portals provide a positive barrier to security breaches by preventing people and things from entering or accessing the secure area from a non-secure area. Through the use of sensors, the portals can detect items that are left in a portal, such as keys, a cell phone, or a bag. If a foreign object is detected, the sensor will cause the portal to lock down until security personnel sweep the portal and clear it for use again. In addition to the safety and security benefits of the exit portals, the cost savings are such that the portals have paid for themselves. Because the exit portals are automated, the airport is no longer required to physically monitor the exit lanes, thus eliminating the human error element.

To place the blame solely on TSA is unfair and not a solution to the problem. Rather, we must work together to address the major underlying issues addressed before you today. What we have learned in Syracuse is that communication and cooperation between the airport, TSA, and the airlines is critical to safe and efficient operations. As proposed in the *Checkpoint Optimization and Efficiency Act of 2016*, we agree that advisory committees be established at a local level. Working together rather than pointing fingers is the first key step at the local level.

What the airports can offer today is the experience we have running one of the most complicated and complex transportation systems in the world. We believe that the focus areas we have identified and the solutions we have proposed will address some of the immediate concerns, but also layout a long-term plan for the continued safety and security of the flying public.

Thank you for your time this morning.

Mr. KATKO. Thank you, Ms. Callahan. Syracuse is indeed very fortunate to have you at the helm at the airport. I can tell you from personal experience that it is a generally very pleasurable experience. The only thing that is difficult is when you are trying to get a flight to Kennedy and it always seemed to be delayed.

But other than that, I really appreciate your efforts. Your forward thinking on getting a kiosk out at the airport, your forward thinking by giving free parking to TSA as like a marketing thing, that thinking outside the box, that is all good stuff. So thank you very much.

I would like to have Ms. McSally introduce her friend from the Tucson airport.

Ms. McSally.

Ms. MCSALLY. Thank you, Chairman Katko. I just want to say I really appreciate you being my wingman on this issue and many issues, letting me join this hearing today. I am also grateful for you inviting Bonnie Allin to testify this morning.

Bonnie is the president and CEO of the Tucson Airport Authority responsible for promoting aviation services and related economic development for southern Arizona, including operations and maintenance of the Tucson International Airport and Ryan Airfield, where she has first-hand experience on the challenges related to TSA staffing.

Bonnie began her career in aviation in 1976 with the Tucson Airport Authority, then moved to Texas, where she worked for Corpus Christi International, ending her tenure as director of aviation. She holds the designation of accredited airport executive and is the past chairman of the International Association of Airport Executives.

I am glad to have Bonnie with us today, and I yield back.

Mr. KATKO. Ms. Allin, you are on.

**STATEMENT OF BONNIE A. ALLIN, PRESIDENT AND CEO,
TUCSON AIRPORT AUTHORITY, TUCSON, ARIZONA**

Ms. ALLIN. Thank you, Representative McSally, for the introduction.

Good morning, Chairman Katko, Ranking Member Payne, honorable Members of the committee, Representative McSally. It is a privilege to appear before you this morning to discuss Tucson's challenges with passenger screening wait times.

Mr. Chairman and Members, thank you for your leadership on airport security and the protection of our passengers.

Representative McSally, thank you for your leadership in protecting Tucson International Airport in southern Arizona.

I was fortunate to participate in last week's roundtable, which you mentioned, Mr. Chairman, and the discussion, and I am truly appreciative of the time and attention you are devoting to understanding the causes of checkpoint processing delays and your efforts to seek both short- and long-term solutions. Safety and security of our people, property, and aircraft are the highest priority.

For those of you unfamiliar with Tucson International Airport, we are an origination and destination airport. Therefore, less than 5 percent of our passengers connect through. Instead, all are screened by local TSA. Historical wait times average 10 to 15 minutes, with our peak times rarely exceeding 20, 25 minutes maximum, even when we had passenger levels 25 percent higher than we do today.

Tucson's high season, as opposed to many other airports, is November through March, with a very strong peak season mid-January through March.

Mr. KATKO. I have to interject, and I can assure you that is not the high season in Syracuse. That is the high season for snow. I am sorry to interrupt you. I couldn't resist.

Ms. ALLIN. We would love for you to visit Tucson in February, sir.

This year our visitors, many, many visitors from the northern part of the country, and our Tucsonian customers experienced wait times 45 and sometimes in excess of 60 minutes. There is an exhibit to my written testimony with a photo of the passengers lined up all across the front of our terminal.

We have a very dedicated and loyal TSA staff who are committed to the safety, along with the efficient screening, of our passengers. Unfortunately, they lack the planning, coordination, and staffing resources needed to be able to efficiently process the passengers in our peak times.

In May 2015, Tucson TSA lost between 10 and 13 percent of the workforce. It was a full year before replacements were trained and released to fully screen and have their duties. Combined with increased passenger levels, adding AIT equipment, and having limited authority due to inflexible staffing and processing models prescribed to them, they did not allow them to respond to the changing conditions, and as a result we experienced very long lines.

I respectfully offer some recommended solutions for your consideration:

It is recommended that the local TSA have the ability to openly communicate with their airport and airline partners in order to better plan and allocate their resources.

That flexibility, autonomy, and authority be delegated to local TSA, within parameters, to adjust for changing conditions, especially spoke airports, such as Tucson.

That regular and consistent staffing at PreCheck lines be allocated so that they can be opened; Tucson's 2 PreCheck lanes are open less than 5 hours a day, usually between 3 and 4.

That the staffing allocation model be updated; it is inflexible and doesn't allow for changing conditions.

That better utilization of existing resources and personnel be made, especially Behavioral Detection Officers.

That effective outreach and marketing of PreCheck and Global Entry, as we are close to the border and it is a very high use there, be done to increase enrollment.

That development of technology to help provide solutions be given a priority.

That optimization of checkpoints be customized to best fit each airport and the information shared.

Airports are willing to invest in effective solutions. Tucson will begin a \$10-plus million project in June to relocate and expand our checkpoints to improve throughput. If they are not properly equipped and staffed, all of those resources will be lost.

Mr. Chairman and Members, while none of these recommendations alone are a perfect fix, by stakeholders working together, we have the opportunity to solve the checkpoint issues and enhance the safety of our aviation system.

We commend you on the proposed legislation, Checkpoint Optimization and Efficiency Act of 2016. If enacted, it will go a very long way towards providing solutions to the checkpoint wait issues.

Thank you for this opportunity to share my views. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Allin follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF BONNIE A. ALLIN

MAY 26, 2016

Good afternoon. My name is Bonnie Allin. I am the president/CEO of the Tucson Airport Authority, Federally-certificated operator of Tucson International Airport, a commercial service airport located in southern Arizona. The 5 largest U.S. domestic airlines providing service at Tucson International Airport fly to 18 non-stop destinations and/or connect our passengers to other destinations throughout the world. These airlines enplane approximately 1.8 million passengers each year, which is down from our peak in 2008 of approximately 2.1 million enplanements, a number we are beginning to grow back through various air service development initiatives. Ninety-five (95) percent of our traffic is origination/destination passengers, which means virtually everyone who travels through Tucson is subject to screening. Historically, passenger wait times at Tucson International Airport averaged approximately 10–15 minutes with maximum times rarely exceeding 20–30 minutes (even when we were at higher passenger levels). The safe, efficient, and convenient processing of passengers is a key element in growing our passenger levels.

Chairman Katko, Ranking Member Payne, Representative McSally, Members of Congress, Members of the subcommittee, thank you for your leadership in this transportation security issue and the opportunity to speak with you today. It is my privilege to be here before you today to represent Category 1 (CAT1) airports.

Mr. Chairman and Members, on behalf of all airports, we appreciate the efforts by Congress to determine the causes of the security screening checkpoint issues and to explore meaningful solutions that provide efficiency without sacrificing security.

I also thank you for the opportunity to be with you this morning to discuss some of the challenges facing Tucson International Airport with regard to growing wait times at passenger screening checkpoints.

I was fortunate enough to participate in last week's roundtable discussion on the same topic, and I am truly appreciative of the time and attention the subcommittee has devoted to understanding the causes of checkpoint processing delays and for your efforts to seek immediate and long-term action to address what is both an inconvenience for travelers and a security threat.

I also want to thank Representative McCally for her focus on this issue and for her work to draw attention to some of the specific challenges we face in Tucson.

The safety and security of people, property, and aircraft are our highest priority. Airports, airlines, and the TSA share the responsibility to provide this protection to the best of our combined abilities at commercial airports throughout the United States. This proactive protection can best be provided when all responsible parties are able to communicate effectively and have the authority to work collaboratively and cooperatively. It should be seamless and invisible to the traveling public, and it should be convenient and customer-friendly. Airports appreciate the very critical mission TSA has to screen and protect passengers and property, and we applaud the dedication of the front line screeners who have a very challenging job. We commend the willingness of Administrator Neffenger to listen to stakeholders and effect change. We have a dedicated local TSA staff, with which we have a very good working relationship.

Like many airports across the United States, Tucson International Airport has experienced issues with long security checkpoint lines due to TSA short-staffing, the unavailability of PreCheck, and a host of other issues. Tucson International Airport's peak period was January through April. During February and March peak periods, passenger lines would stretch from 1 of our 2 concourse checkpoints across the ticket lobby almost reaching the other end of the terminal. Please see Exhibit A. Flights were delayed to wait for passengers or some missed their flights. With full loads, rebooking was often a problem, particularly for those international customers with connections attending the International Tucson Gem and Mineral Show.

The long lines at security checkpoints at U.S. commercial airports, including Tucson International Airport, clearly indicate the system is not working efficiently or meeting the shared goals. Tucson's historical average wait time was 10–15 minutes, and even when in years when passenger levels were at their highest, peak times rarely exceeded 20–30 minutes. A common theme heard across the Nation's airports is increased number of passengers, increased leisure passengers, which are often families who are not frequent fliers and are slower to accomplish the screening process, and a reduction in TSA staffing over the last few years. This can be very frustrating when there is unused capacity in extra security lanes, but no TSA personnel to open them because of manpower shortage issues. Tucson is an origination and destination airport with less than 5% of our passengers transferring, thus has a high proportion of passengers to be screened.

In addition, under the TSA model, PreCheck is open on average less than 5 hours a day (both concourses total) due to TSA being understaffed and not able to get the manpower needed to provide this important service. As we observe and understand the model, one regular lane is open and PreCheck passenger are provided "PreCheck light." PreCheck light is where a passenger is given a card by the Travel Document Checker (TDC) that allows the passenger to keep their shoes and jacket on, but must divest of all other items such as liquids and laptops. They then must go through the same screening line as the non-PreCheck customers. This is unfortunate because the TSA promotes this program, passengers pay to sign up, then face disappointment and extreme frustration when they arrive at the airport and find that the TSA PreCheck lane is not open. The TSA needs to commit to this program, and this commitment requires staffing resources.

TSA has limitations on the number of Full Time Employee (FTEs) they can hire. TSA could be more flexible and cross-train functions to perform more than one security task to increase efficiency when scheduling or manpower demands arise. For instance, Behavior Detection Officers (BDOs) are not certified to perform all screening functions like X-ray, but are trained to be TDCs utilizing their deception detection training.

The TSA is facing a manpower shortage, and it will take time for the TSA to hire, train, and certify the new FTEs. Short-term solutions aimed at reducing customer wait times are necessary to manage the summer travel season.

I would like to ask your consideration of potential recommended solutions.

Establish more effective and consistent communication and coordination.

We applaud your proposed legislation “Checkpoint Optimization and Efficiency Act of 2016” requiring each airport establish a joint committee of airport, airline, and TSA representatives that has mandatory meetings, and has the authority to review advance boarding data, proactively plan and schedule for the effective screening of passengers and bags, and the protection of property and aircraft. The committee should have the ability to meet, as necessary, to react to emerging issues.

TSA’s local airport representatives should be delegated the authority to be an effective member of the committee and have the ability to make quick adjustments within established broad parameters to meet the mission.

When lines reach a certain maximum throughput with 1 lane open, the local TSA is authorized to open a second regular lane. The staffing model does not allow sufficient staff to open the PreCheck lane instead of a regular lane which would greatly expedite the screening process throughput. Some small airports have reported that TSA will close their checkpoint for the night after the last scheduled departure due to the inability to keep staff on overtime. Passengers track the flight via the airline and know a flight is late, show up for the flight and are not allowed to board because they cannot be screened. Local control to manage unusual situations would greatly improve throughput capabilities.

More efficient use of existing resources is recommended. Your legislations’ proposal to utilize TSA BDOs during peak periods to the TDC positions would provide an immediate increase in manpower. This will allow the BDOs to use their behavioral detection skills by having direct contact with every passenger prior to the passenger passing through the security screening checkpoint. We understand and appreciate that Administrator Neffenger has already approved this change.

Allow the TSA the flexibility to utilize non-certified screening personnel to perform divestiture, bin-running, line management, and exit lane duties during peak times. This will allow the certified Transportation Screening Officers (TSOs) to focus on and expedite the security screening functions.

Authorize the immediate replacement of and expedite the hiring of replacement TSOs. Currently, the hiring process can take as long as 12 months for the TSA to hire, train, and certify replacement personnel. In May 2015 Tucson International Airport TSA lost 10% of its workforce. Those positions, plus others lost through regular attrition were not hired, trained, certified and in place until the end of April 2016. This process is too long, degrades efficiency, and creates extreme passenger frustration through long wait or missed flights.

Authorize the TSA to conduct standardized local TSO training until the backlog of hiring and training is eliminated. A long-term solution could be to consider opening more than one center, geographically located throughout the country to allow for shorter waits for training slots.

Appropriately staff all airport security screening checkpoints, including having dedicated staff and a predictable schedule to adequately staff the PreCheck during peak travel hours and airport operating hours.

In many cases, the Federal Security Director may be responsible for more than 1 airport. This means that “spoke airports” are geographically separated (example: Phoenix and Tucson; Las Vegas and Reno). It is recommended that the TSA official at the “spoke airport” have the authority to effectively manage for exceptions and have the flexibility to increase part-time hours, reduce the need for excessive overtime, and make other operational decisions, as needed.

Update the TSA Staffing Allocation Model (SAM) to be flexible and adapt to the changing conditions of an airport and airline environment. The present model is rigid and relies heavily on the prior years’ data. The SAM needs to be reviewed frequently (perhaps quarterly) and incorporate triggers that better take into account new flights, new or up-gauged equipment, the change in passenger numbers, expanded hours, etc. When the triggers are activated, there should be the flexibility to make adjustments immediately. Allow local TSA involvement and consultation or sharing with local airports and airlines.

Allow TSA to authorize the PreCheck enrollment contractor to deploy flexible strategies for enrollment in airports at peak times. The Contractor needs to have an effective education and marketing program to inform and register passengers for PreCheck. Offsite centers do not attract or inform passengers. They are most likely to sign up when standing in checkpoint lines. Consider reduced or no-cost enrollment until the numbers reach TSA goals.

Deploy passenger screening canines at the high volume airports to expedite the screening process.

Your Congressional review and oversight of how the financial resources collected from passengers are utilized to ensure the resources are prioritized and effectively used for the benefit of protection of people, aviation property, and aircraft would be helpful.

Technology should be developed, tested, approved, and deployed in an expedient time frame. Consider funding pilot programs with academic or private company partnerships to encourage development of new technology.

Understand that each airport has infrastructure and needs that are unique and different from other airports. There is no “one size fits all.” While there needs to be standardization in the security screening process, the layout of checkpoints should include more flexibility to make adjustments that allow for the effective use of the area, equipment, and personnel.

Deploy the TSA optimization teams to review the checkpoint layouts and include the airport and airlines serving that airport in the review and recommendation process.

We are grateful to advise that the TSA at Tucson International Airport is receiving the trained staff replacements, and are able to adjust the overtime to better cover peak periods. We are now at the end of our busy season, and with these replacements, the lines’ wait times have been reduced and are now closer to normal. Our concern is that when traffic picks up in the fall for the holidays and our peak season that the long lines will return. With implementation of the changes you recommend, especially allowing for PreCheck to be open longer, this can be mitigated. We are also hopeful that some of these recommendations will be helpful to many airports throughout the United States.

As a long-term solution, the Tucson Airport Authority is doing its part by investing \$10.7 million into relocating both checkpoints to allow for additional lanes to accommodate passenger growth through a Terminal Optimization Project. This solution will only be effective if it is appropriately equipped and staffed.

In closing, I want to thank Chairman Katko, Ranking Member Payne, Representative McSally, Members of Congress, Members of the subcommittee, for your time today and your thoughtful consideration of the issues and solutions presented. We also appreciate TSA Administrator Neffenger’s willingness to work toward and try ideas to achieve solutions. Airports stand ready to work with you and the TSA to put in place effective solutions that properly protect and serve our passengers.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.





Mr. KATKO. Thank you, Ms. Allin, for your testimony. We appreciate you being here today. It is interesting to juxtapose your experiences at your airport with what we experience in Syracuse. It seems like the larger the airport, the more acute the problems.

Now we are going to talk to Ms. Beirsto about that.

So, Ms. Beirsto, I appreciate your testimony today, and you have 5 minutes. Thank you.

STATEMENT OF LYDIA BEIRSTO, MANAGING DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FOR SECURITY, DEPARTMENT OF AVIATION, CITY OF CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Ms. BEIRSTO. Thank you, Chairman Katko, Ranking Member Payne, and Members of the subcommittee for inviting me to testify today on this important issue of providing efficient and safe passenger screening at our airports. My name is Lydia Beirsto. I serve as the managing deputy commissioner for public safety and security for the Chicago Department of Aviation, overseeing O'Hare and Midway International Airports.

Chicago manages 2 of the Nation's busiest airports, O'Hare and Midway, and it is the only single-city system that serves as a hub for 3 major airlines, United, American, and Southwest Airlines. In 2015, 98 million passengers passed through our airports combined. In 2016 and beyond, those numbers are projected to grow.

Our airports serve as an economic engine, contributing \$45 billion in annual economic activity, creating 540,000 jobs. We are a major part of the air ecosystem. When O'Hare sneezes, the rest of the country catches a cold.

Passenger safety and security is our top priority, and it is certainly mine. In March, suicide bombings at Brussels Airport killed 16 people in the airport check-in areas and 16 others in the city metro station. Long security lines, large crowds of passengers in queues are not just an inconvenience. They, themselves, expose a vulnerability and security risk.

By more efficiently moving passengers into the screened and secure areas, we are increasing safety and security. This year, there has been a 7 percent growth in passenger activity, while TSA staffing levels declined nearly 17 percent.

Airports and airlines began raising concerns about security staffing for the summer travel season as early as last summer. By early May of this year, as our peak travel season started, we started experiencing a total breakdown. Passenger wait times were consistently 60 minutes or more. Airline passengers have reported wait times as high as 120 minutes, with thousands of passengers missing their flights.

The delays we experienced were knowable and preventable. Staff resources went down as security operating procedures changed.

Moving forward to address these issues, TSA resources are needed to increase and meet passenger demand. TSA needs to manage existing resources better. TSA needs flexibility and local authority to respond to situations on the ground.

May 13, a traveler at Midway Airport posted a YouTube video documenting significant checkpoint lines. Six out of 17 lanes were staffed by TSA.

At O'Hare, the situation reached crisis point on Sunday, May 15, where without adequate staffing American Airlines reported 543 passengers were impacted by long lines. United Airlines experienced 37 flight delays and rebooked over 4,300 passengers, many of which, as you noted, Chairman, stayed overnight at the airport sleeping on cots.

Mayor Rahm Emanuel worked with key officials from DHS, TSA, and members of Chicago's Congressional delegation to secure immediate resources for the city. TSA sent in optimization teams.

They committed to add 58 officers to O'Hare, converted over 160 part-timers to a full-time duty, increased overtime, and provided 8 additional K-9 teams to O'Hare from around the country.

We greatly appreciate Administrator Neffenger's responsiveness and that resources arrived so quickly for O'Hare. We are working to ensure similar prompt responses to the needs and concerns at Midway Airport.

This response was possible because Congress approved TSA's reprogramming request, and we are grateful to you for taking that quick action.

To ensure transparency, we will be releasing a biweekly scorecard showing average and maximum wait times, staffing and resource levels provided by TSA.

In the short term, in order to manage the spring and summer travel season ahead, there are a few critical resources and management steps that we need to ensure are happening:

- Reallocate passenger-screening K-9 teams based on the aviation system priorities.

- Ensure TSA is transparent about its staffing allocation models and levels; information transparency helps us better predict potential staffing strategies and shortages.

- Provide Federal security directors the ability to make local decisions about manpower allocation and overtime.

- Ensure checkpoints are open on time or risk playing catch-up all day.

- Streamline TSA PreCheck enrollment process.

In the long term we need to be looking at ramping up resources, including passenger screening K-9s. To prepare for future growth, we need to start now, as training K-9s can take approximately up to 8 months. We need to invest in our security infrastructure and checkpoint expansion projects and invest in technology solutions that enhance security and achieve operational efficiencies.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss these important and timely issues with you today. We are eager to work with you and secure needed resources to address short-term and long-term airport security challenges.

Mr. KATKO. Thank you, Ms. Beirsto. Much of what you described towards the end of your testimony is embodied in the bill we are going to be presenting today to Congress. It is born out of our discussions with some of the folks in the audience last week and some of you, and I appreciate that. It is important.

One side thing that you said that caught me was opening the gates on time. If I understand, and perhaps you can all comment on this later, sometimes they open the gate at, like, 5:30 in the morning, but they don't actually start screening passengers for a while because they have to calibrate the machines and stuff. Then once the back-up starts, you can't catch up. That is just poor planning.

So there is much more to talk about with all of, but thank you very much for your testimony.

I now recognize Ms. Kerry Philipovitch, the senior vice president for customer experience at American Airlines—which I know very well because that is how I get here every week—for her testimony.

**STATEMENT OF KERRY PHILPOVITCH, SENIOR VICE
PRESIDENT, CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE, AMERICAN AIRLINES**

Ms. PHILPOVITCH. Thank you for flying with us.

Good morning Chairman Katko, Congressman Payne, and Members of the subcommittee. My name is Kerry Philipovitch, senior vice president of customer experience at American Airlines, testifying on behalf of Airlines for America. Thank you for inviting me here today to discuss the impact TSA security lines is having on our customers.

There is nothing more important to the airline industry than the safety and security of our passengers, employees, and cargo. We have never seen TSA wait times that affect airlines and passengers throughout the United States like we have seen in recent months.

Without immediate leadership and innovation, the 231 million Americans that will board a plane this summer will be frustrated and angry. We are working collaboratively with the TSA to develop and implement solutions to the pressing problem of excessive wait times.

Last year, programs that had been in place to drive efficiency and increase security throughput were eliminated without adding resources required to support longer passenger processing times. The result is a screening process that is causing unacceptably long security lines and a frustrated flying public.

Our discussions with TSA revealed 3 other contributing factors. First, it appears TSA did not adjust its staffing model after screening protocols were changed. Second, TSA is experiencing abnormally high attrition and is unable to retain transportation security officers, or TSOs. Third, the TSA PreCheck program, which allows low-risk passengers to go through expedited screening, has not met enrollment goals.

All of these factors combined cause a systemic slowdown in passenger processing at security checkpoints, resulting in delays and missed flights. Year-to-date, more than 70,000 American Airlines customers have missed flights due to excessive wait times.

The same challenges at the passenger checkpoints bog down screening of checked baggage, which is also a core TSA function. This year alone, over 40,000 checked bags were delayed in TSA screening and did not travel on their scheduled flights.

To say customers are agitated is putting it mildly and the public outcry has resonated. Congress recently reallocated \$34 million in funding to the TSA to hire more TSOs by June 15. We are also glad to see that TSA is working to shift K-9 teams to airports experiencing the worst delays, rebalancing staffing, and hiring more TSOs.

However, TSA needs to do more, and more collaboration is needed to minimize the impact on summer travelers, airports, airline employees, and the overall economy.

Airlines are pitching in to do our part. We are committing millions of dollars to fund nonsecurity functions like bin running and queue management so TSAs can focus solely on screening customers.

At American this summer, we are adding an additional \$4 million on top of the \$17 million already planned to spend this year to facilitate passengers through TSA checkpoints at our largest air-

ports. Airlines have advised customers to arrive at the airport 2 hour in advance of a domestic flight and 3 hours prior to an international departure to ensure sufficient time to clear security. This added time in the travel process is inconvenient and will likely affect less frequent travelers who are not familiar with the screening process.

We are launching aggressive campaigns to promote TSA PreCheck to our customers and employees. As PreCheck enrollment increases, however, TSA must commit to keep PreCheck lanes open and sufficiently staffed throughout the day, especially during peak travel times.

The industry is also exploring ways to facility support for additional K-9 teams, including whether TSA can use certified K-9s from other Governmental agencies to conduct passenger screening. When K-9 teams are deployed, TSA can increase passengers going through TSA PreCheck.

We as an industry are doing our part to help TSA manage through this challenge. However, airline actions alone cannot solve the problem. We need a partner in TSA that will consider innovative ideas to mitigate wait times immediately and in the long run.

In the short term, to augment resources, TSA could declare an all-hands-on-deck for the summer, much like we do at our airports during peak and irregular operations. All available staff should be assigned to help at passengers screening checkpoints. TSA resources should be prioritized based on airports with the most need and projected traffic volumes.

TSA could look at ways to spur enrollment in TSA PreCheck by streamlining the enrollment process. To ensure that enrollment resources don't become a new bottleneck, TSA should expedite its selection of third-party enrollment providers.

We also support the idea to give Federal security directors the ability to cooperate with their airline partners to make local decisions about manpower resource allocation without having to consult TSA headquarters.

All parties need to work collaboratively to manage through the summer. Full transparency to staffing models and performance data is required to engage all stakeholders in troubleshooting issues. We can't be a part of the solution if we don't have all the facts.

To that point, we applaud TSA for its decision this week to stand up a National command center and institute daily stakeholder calls to better prepare for each day's challenges.

In the long run, TSA could review current security protocols to ensure there are no unnecessary procedures. As part of this review, TSA should consider additional methods for increasing risk-based screening, some of which were discontinued this year.

Airlines and airports are eager to work with TSA to expedite next-generation screening technology, including innovation lanes.

Finally, TSA must create a position that reports to the administrator to advocate for customers within the TSA, much as airlines and many airports have executives dedicated to improving customer experience.

These are just a few ideas that American Airlines and A4A believe can help reduce the congestion in security screening. Of

course, Congress can help by ensuring Administrator Neffenger and his team have the tools and resources needed to improve screening, including ensuring that the passenger security fee collected for TSA goes to TSA.

Ultimately, the TSA screening issue was not created overnight and will not be solved overnight. However, we must work together to offer ideas and resources to TSA while Administrator Neffenger and his team review current screening protocols, funding priorities, and management practices.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Philipovitch follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF KERRY PHILIPOVITCH

MAY 26, 2016

Good morning Chairman Katko, Ranking Member Rice, and Members of the subcommittee. My name is Kerry Philipovitch, senior vice president of customer experience at American Airlines, testifying on behalf of Airlines for America. Thank you for inviting me here today to discuss the impact TSA security lines is having on our customers.

The subcommittee's focus on this issue is both timely and beneficial since we are just 2 days shy of the Memorial Day weekend and the start of the busy summer travel season. Regardless of timing, there is nothing more important to the airline industry than the safety and security of our passengers, employees, and cargo.

We have never seen TSA wait times that affect airlines and passengers throughout the United States like we've seen in recent months. Without immediate leadership and innovation, the 231 million Americans that will board a plane this summer will be frustrated and angry passengers. We are working collaboratively with the TSA to develop and implement short-, medium-, and long-term solutions to the pressing problem of excessive wait times, but more needs to be done, and fast.

THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM

Up until last year, TSA front-line employees kept our skies safe while efficiently moving passengers through the screening process. Programs that had been in place to drive efficiency and increase security throughput were then eliminated without adding commensurate resources required to support longer passenger processing times. The result is a screening process that is causing unacceptably long security lines and a frustrated flying public.

Our discussions with the TSA have revealed 3 other contributing factors. First, it appears TSA did not adjust its staffing model after screening protocols were changed. Second, TSA is experiencing abnormally high attrition and is unable to retain Transportation Security Officers, or TSOs. Third, the TSA PreCheck program, which allows low-risk passengers to go through an expedited screening process, has not met enrollment goals.

All of these factors combined caused a systemic slowdown in passenger processing at security checkpoints, resulting in delays and missed flights. Year-to-date, more than 70,000 American Airlines customers have missed flights due to excessive wait times.

The same challenges at passenger checkpoints bog down screening of checked baggage, which is also a core TSA function. This year alone, over 40,000 checked bags were delayed in TSA screening and did not travel on their scheduled flight, causing further inconvenience to our customers.

To say customers are agitated is putting it mildly, and the public outcry has resonated. Congress recently reallocated \$34 million in funding to TSA to hire more TSOs by June 15. We are also glad to see that TSA is working to shift canine teams to airports experiencing the worst delays, rebalancing staffing and hiring more TSOs.

However, TSA needs to do more, and more collaboration is needed to minimize the impact on summer travelers, airports, airline employees, and the overall economy.

AIRLINES ARE DOING OUR PART TO SUPPORT TSA

Airlines are pitching in to do our part. We are committing millions of dollars to fund non-security functions—like bin running and queue management—so TSOs can focus solely on the screening aspects of their jobs. At American, this summer we are adding an additional \$4 million on top of our \$17 million of planned spend this year to facilitate passengers through TSA checkpoints at our largest airports.

Airlines have advised customers to arrive at the airport 2 hours in advance of a domestic flight and 3 hours prior to an international departure to ensure sufficient time to clear security. This added time in the travel process is inconvenient, and will likely affect less frequent travelers who are not familiar with the screening process. The added hassle also has the potential to significantly dampen demand for air travel.

We are launching aggressive campaigns to promote TSA PreCheck to our customers and employees. As PreCheck enrollment increases, however, TSA must commit to keep PreCheck lanes open and sufficiently staffed, reliably throughout the day, especially during peak travel times.

When canine teams are deployed, TSA can increase passengers going through TSA PreCheck. The industry is also exploring ways to facilitate support for additional canine teams, including whether TSA can use certified canines from other Governmental agencies to conduct passenger screening.

We, as an industry, are doing our part to help TSA manage through this challenge.

AIRLINES ARE WILLING TO WORK WITH TSA TO SOLVE THE SECURITY SCREENING ISSUE

However, airline actions alone cannot solve the problem. We need a partner in TSA that will consider innovative ideas to mitigate wait times immediately and in the long run.

In the short term, to augment resources, TSA could declare an “all hands on deck” for the summer much like we do at airports during peak and irregular operations. All available staff—whether full-time, part-time, administrative, or based at headquarters—should be assigned to help at passenger screening checkpoints. TSA resources should be prioritized based on airports with the most need and projected traffic volumes.

TSA could look at ways to spur enrollment in TSA PreCheck by streamlining the enrollment process, and potentially reducing the fee to enroll. To ensure that enrollment resources don’t become a new bottleneck, TSA should expedite its selection of third-party enrollment providers.

We also encourage TSA to give Federal Security Directors the ability to coordinate and cooperate with their airline partners to make local decisions about manpower resource allocation without having to consult TSA headquarters.

TSA, airports, and airlines need to work collaboratively to manage through the summer. Full transparency to staffing models and performance data is required to engage all stakeholders in troubleshooting issues. We can’t be a part of the solution if we don’t have all the facts.

To that point, we applaud TSA for its decision, this week, to stand up a National command center and institute a daily stakeholder call to better prepare for each day’s challenges.

In the long run, TSA could review current security protocols to ensure there is no duplication or unnecessary procedures. As a part of this review, TSA should consider additional methods for increasing risk-based screening, some of which were discontinued last year.

Airlines and airports are eager to work with TSA to expedite next generation screening technology, such as that found in Innovation Lanes.

Finally, TSA must create a position that reports to the administrator to advocate for customers within TSA, just as airlines and many airports have executives dedicated to improving customer experience.

These are just a few ideas that American Airlines and A4A believe can help reduce the severe congestion in airport security screening. Of course, Congress can help by ensuring Administrator Neffenger and his team have the tools and resources needed to improve screening, including ensuring that the passenger security fee collected for TSA goes to TSA.

A SHORT-TERM MORATORIUM ON BAGGAGE FEES WILL NOT HELP OR FIX THE BROKEN SYSTEM

We challenge all stakeholders to offer constructive ideas that will bring relief. Yet, one idea we have heard is for airlines to waive checked baggage fees this summer.

The rationale is that the number of bags screened at passenger checkpoints would decrease so appreciably that the TSA wait times would return to normal. The premise of the idea is flat-out wrong, and distracts from the root problems of the TSA crisis.

The fact is that bag fees have been in place since 2008, but travelers have never been impacted by TSA wait times like we've recently seen.

Over the last few months, all passengers have experienced long TSA lines, even those flying on carriers that do not charge bag fees. Chicago Midway, for example, is served predominantly by one of our competitors that does not charge checked baggage fees, yet airport security wait times have still been in excess of 90 minutes. There is simply no correlation.

Waiving checked baggage fees would not have any material impact on wait times. Indeed, TSA's own data shows the number of checked bags per person has remained relatively unchanged for the past 5 years.

What we do believe, however, is that eliminating bag fees certainly would increase the number and size of checked bags. Additional checked bags would further inundate TSA baggage screening, which already lacks the resources to timely and consistently screen checked bags.

Phoenix and Miami, two of American's hubs, have suffered from baggage delays in recent months. Both airports have sustained tens of thousands of misconnected checked bags solely due to TSA issues.

This idea isn't helpful, it's harmful. It wouldn't help the core problem of wait times but it would make the checked baggage problem worse. And, at a time all airlines are trying to help TSA through their crisis, it is diverting attention from that effort.

WORKING TOWARD A SOLUTION

Ultimately, the TSA screening issue was not created overnight, and will not be solved overnight. However, we must work together to offer ideas and resources to TSA while Administrator Neffenger and his team review current screening protocols, funding priorities, and management practices.

The industry continues to work cooperatively with TSA, airports and other stakeholders to better serve our valued customers.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Mr. KATKO. Thank you, Ms. Philipovitch. I appreciate your testimony.

We will have several follow-up questions for all of you, of course.

I now recognize David Cox, National president of the American Federation of Government Employees, for his testimony.

Mr. Cox.

STATEMENT OF J. DAVID COX, SR., NATIONAL PRESIDENT, AMERICAN FEDERATION OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

Mr. Cox. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Representative Payne, Members of the committee. I am proud to testify today on behalf of the 42,000 transportation security officers, TSOs, that AFGE represents that stand on the side of the safety of the flying American public.

TSOs point to 4 issues that have conspired to produce the acute situation at airports we see today. No. 1, the size of the TSO workforce did not keep pace with passenger volume. No. 2, TSA's budget was deprived of much-needed funding by the decision of Congress to divert a portion of the security fee to deficit reduction. No. 3, the focus on the patchwork of airline, airport, and contract employees shifted focus away from the TSO workforce that is the present and future of aviation security. No. 4, TSOs are subject to second-class treatment that hurts the morale of TSOs who stay on the job and causes too many experienced screeners to leave TSA.

As passenger volume has increased 15 percent between 2013 and 2016, TSA lost almost 5,000 screeners and failed to replace them. TSA's hiring was focused on part-time workers who have a much higher attrition rate than full-time TSOs. TSA's staffing methodology and model depended on PreCheck enrollments that never happened. Congress cut the budget for TSA personnel and imposed arbitrary caps on the number of full-time screeners.

Staffing shortages are obvious to the public because they experience long lines. Least obvious are the effect of shortages on the TSO workforce—missed trainings, meals, and rest breaks, missed position rotations that are necessary to keep your focus, cancelled days off, and months of mandatory overtime, resulting in very tired and erratic scheduling. This is no way to run airport security.

AFGE advocates an increase of 6,000 additional full-time TSOs to the workforce. The figure represents the decrease in the size of the TSA workforce since 2011 as passenger volume has grown 15 percent.

AFGE also calls on Congress to end the arbitrary and severe cap on full-time TSOs. When Congress voted to divert 60 cents of the \$5.60 security fee per enplanement to the Treasury rather than TSA, it deprived the agency of 1.25 billion—that is billion with a “b”—dollars each year. It is time for Congress to dedicate the proceeds of the security fee to TSA to be used for its intended purpose, funding the agency's security mission and hiring staff.

Introducing airline and airport employees and private contract employees into the framework of checkpoint security is, at best, a temporary bandage. Years of on-the-job experience and commitment to the public are the services that are lost when the TSO workforce is replaced with airport and airline employees.

Airport authorities should be aware that they are not going to get more screeners under the Screening Partnership Program and that there are long checkpoint waits at airports with private screeners.

Despite the importance of their work, TSOs receive second-class treatment from their employer, the Federal Government. TSA is the only Federal agency that is allowed to excuse itself from the fundamental workplace rights and protections found in title 5 of the U.S. Code. TSA does not follow the Fair Labor Standards Act and the Office of Personnel Management guidelines on leave. TSA does not have statutory title 7 protections against discrimination, and they are not paid under the general schedule like the majority of Federal workforce. TSOs lack the ability to appeal adverse personnel actions to a neutral third party, like the Merit System Protection Board, even those TSO management has that right.

To paraphrase the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., justice delayed has been justice denied to the TSO workforce. It is well within the authority of both the Congress and TSA to provide TSOs the same workplace rights and protections as other Federal workers.

We urge Administrator Neffenger to apply title 5 rights and protections to the TSO workforce. Congress should pass H.R. 4488, the Rights of Transportation Security Officers Act, introduced by Representatives Bennie Thompson and Nita Lowey. The bill requires that TSA follow the same workplace rules as most agencies in the Federal Government. Congress should also ensure funding to TSA

to provide 5 percent retention raises to TSOs who have been on the job for 2 or more years.

Transportation Security Officers do all they can to screen passengers. That is why AFGE pledges to work with TSA, Congress, and the public on solutions for the long lines. Mr. Chairman, AFGE is asking and seeking a seat at the table to be part of the solution, not part of the problem, in what we are currently experiencing in TSA.

Thank you very much for allowing me to testify today. I would be glad to take any questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Cox follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF J. DAVID COX, SR.

MAY 26, 2016

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Rice, and Members of the subcommittee: My name is J. David Cox, Sr., and I am the National president of the American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO (AFGE). On behalf of the more than 670,000 Federal and District of Columbia workers our union represents, including over 42,000 Transportation Security Officers (TSOs) working to provide safe and secure travel for over 2 million passengers each day, I thank you for the opportunity to testify today on "Long Lines, Short Patience: Local Perspectives." TSOs have always stood on the side of the flying public. Their job is to provide efficient screening to the best of their abilities to keep passengers safe when they fly. Even though TSOs did not create the conditions resulting in seemingly endless lines at airport checkpoints, they are ones who must deal directly with the shortsightedness of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), the airlines, airport authorities, and the Congress. AFGE's TSA members have much to offer as all parties begin to work together to resolve the challenges of long passenger wait times without sacrificing security.

The TSO workforce observes current conditions at checkpoint and also witnessed the emergence and growth of all the problems that are only recently the subject of news stories. These long lines were an inevitable consequence of decisions that have been made by TSA and Congress over the past 5 years. TSOs can point to 4 issues that have conspired to produce the acute situation we see today: (1) Decline in the size of the TSO workforce; (2) Diversion of the security fee; (3) Emphasis on an array of non-Federal personnel as a temporary "fix" to staffing issues; and (4) Second-class treatment of the TSO workforce.

1. *The TSO workforce was allowed deliberately to fall by attrition while passenger volume increased.*—TSA admits that TSO staffing levels fell from 47,147 full-time employees to 42,525 between 2013 and 2016. Concurrent passenger volume rose 15 percent in this period. According to recent Congressional statements, in 2014, TSA only hired 373 workers to replace the 4,644 who left the agency. The few employees hired during that period of time were disproportionately part-time TSOs who have a much higher attrition rate than the full-time TSO workforce. Congress cut the TSA budget for TSO compensation and benefits and continued a misguided cap on the number of full-time employees. TSA failed to request the funding needed to fully staff checkpoints or even hire up to the statutory cap. TSA's staffing projections included passenger participation in PreCheck that never materialized. The Staffing Allocation Model (SAM) did not take into account these factors and clearly fell short of the deployments necessary to prevent long waits at checkpoint. The impact on the flying public is obvious: Wait times that are up to 3 hours long and missed flights have become a normal part of the flying experience for passengers. The impact on TSOs is less obvious: TSOs often do not rotate positions (a requirement to retain focus), miss trainings, meals, and rest breaks and for months have endured mandatory overtime and cancelled days off due to TSA's operational needs. Female TSOs face an additional burden because of the continuing inadequate male to female ratios at the airports. The current crisis was both foreseeable and preventable.
2. *Airline fees and distribution of the security fee.*—Two fees affect the checkpoint: Airline fees for checked baggage and the diversion of .60 of every \$5.60 of the security fee collected to deficit reduction instead of screening. Many passengers seek to avoid the checked baggage fee charged by airlines, which is typically \$25 for the first bag and \$35 for the second with carry-on bags. TSOs re-

port the number of bags passengers screen as carry-ons has increased with the fees. Although Congress increased the security fee in 2014, \$1.25 billion each year is diverted to deficit reduction. Airline checked bag fees have changed the behavior of the flying public while much of the security fee needed to fund screening operations is currently beyond TSA's grasp.

3. *The patchwork of airline, airport, and contract employees working around the checkpoint.*—The use of airline and airport authority employees included in Department of Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson's plan and individual decisions by airport authorities to hire contract workers undermine the ability to realize a permanent solution for current staffing shortages. The safety of the public required Federalization of screening duties following the terrible events of September 11, 2001. Airports in the Screening Partnership Program (SPP) are also experiencing long lines and frustrated passengers. Private security companies are required to follow the same procedures and SAM as airports with Federal TSOs. Airports in the Screening Partnership Program have serious problems. TSA ended the contracts at 4 Montana airports because the screening companies were unable to meet the agency's requirements for security. Multiple security breaches occurred after Orlando Sanford Airport privatized screening. There is a decline in workforce experience when airports privatize security screening. TSOs want to serve the public as Government employees; they do not want their security mission compromised by the for-profit incentives of private contractors. AFGE also questions the provision in Secretary Johnson's 10-point plan that depends on airline and airport authority employees to "pitch-in" on "non-screening" duties. We are concerned about the definition of "non-screener duties," the rigor of background checks and training received by these employees, and the presence of individuals who are not TSA employees or passengers in the checkpoint area.

4. *Despite the importance of their work, TSOs receive second-class treatment from their employer, the Federal Government.*—As the economy improves and working conditions at TSA worsen, increasingly TSOs are voting with their feet and leaving TSA. Many former TSOs now work for other Government agencies. TSOs do not have the same rights and protections as other Federal workers, including those employed by other DHS agencies, because the agency is able to ignore the law. TSA has excused itself from complying with the Federal Labor Standards Act and the Office of Personnel Management guidelines and rules governing leave, including the Family Medical Leave Act. TSOs do not have statutory Title VII protections against discrimination, and are not paid under the General Schedule. Starting wages for a TSO are about \$15 per hour, even as we are reminded by recent world events that terrorists remain focused on attacking commercial aviation world-wide.

The duties of a TSO require adherence to a number of different screening procedures that must be performed quickly, with no room for error, unpredictable hours due to staffing shortages, and do so while treating passengers with friendly respect. AFGE is particularly concerned that staffing shortages have placed an unnecessary burden on female TSOs. Although over one-half of all passengers are female, women comprise less than 40% of the TSO workforce. The disparity in numbers has resulted in female TSOs being denied the ability to bid for shift or positions due to a shortage of women at the checkpoint. All TSOs bear the burden of disciplinary review procedures created by TSA with no ability to appeal adverse personnel actions to a neutral third party like the Merit Systems Protection Board or a negotiated grievance procedure. The denial of fundamental workplace rights has nothing to do with security and does not make the country safer.

From the perspective of TSOs, their job is to screen passengers and bags effectively and efficiently. Their first priority is to keep the flying public safe, and to do so as proficiently as possible. Here are their ideas:

1. *Return the workforce to 2011 levels.* The continued practice of starving TSA screening operations of necessary funding must stop immediately. As enacted, the proceeds of the Passenger, or the September 11 Security Fee, only captured 36% of TSA's costs to provide aviation security. In 2014, fee increases were partially diverted to address the deficit and are deposited in the general fund of the Treasury. Despite rising passenger volume, Congress only increased the TSA budget by less than 1 percent between fiscal year 2015 and fiscal year 2016. Even with knowledge of the gaps between passenger growth and staffing, the fiscal year 2017 budget request for TSA asked to fund a staffing request for an additional paltry 323 positions. Congress should pass emergency legislation to ensure funding to fully staff TSA checkpoints. TSA should face no obstacle in applying fee proceeds to TSO staffing as necessary. Congress must finally end the arbitrary and severe cap on full-time TSOs. Like other agencies in the

Department of Homeland Security, TSA should be able to hire the number of full-time TSOs required to fulfill its mission.

2. *Dedicate the proceeds of the Security Fee to TSA.*—Perhaps the most obvious solution to funding problems at TSA is to utilize the security fee for the reason it was intended: To finance the mission of the agency.

3. *Increase efforts to retain the current TSO workforce.*—It is well within the authority of both Congress and TSA to address the issues set forth in this testimony. The TSO workforce is not a footnote to the agency's goal of effectively and efficiently screening passengers. The work of TSA falls greatly on the shoulders of the TSO workforce. Their common-sense solutions address both current understaffing and prevent a future reoccurrence. We urge lawmakers to direct Administrator Neffenger to apply title 5 rights protections to the TSO workforce. AFGE strongly supports H.R. 4488, the Rights for Transportation Security Officers Act, introduced by Representatives Bennie Thompson and Nita Lowey. The bill requires TSA to follow the same workplace rules as the majority of agencies in the Federal Government. TSA consistently receives the lowest rating from its employees when surveyed, including the current Best Places to Work in the Federal Government survey, where TSA ranked 313th out of 320 agencies. AFGE believes TSA's low ratings are attributable to TSA's unique ability to choose which rights and protections apply to the workforce.

In addition, TSA should provide TSOs who have been on the job 2 years or longer with an immediate 5% longevity pay increase to finally adjust their wages to match the 5% wage increase paid to employees of less than 2 years in 2015. Protections and rights under title 5 and fair compensation for their work will finally provide the TSO workforce with the respect and stability appropriate to their position in the framework of homeland security with the added benefit of supporting the retention of an experienced TSO workforce.

4. *Private-sector employees are a diversion from the permanent Federal staffing solution required at checkpoint.*—AFGE does not support the provision of Secretary Johnson's plan allowing airport and airline employees to be assigned duties around the checkpoint to "free-up" TSOs for screening duties. The Aviation and Transportation Security Act, Public Law 107-71 at Section 44901 states:

"The Under Secretary of Transportation for Security shall provide for the screening of all passengers and property, including United States mail, cargo, carry-on and checked baggage, and other articles, that will be carried aboard a passenger aircraft operated by an air carrier or foreign air carrier in air transportation or intrastate air transportation. In the case of flights and flight segments originating in the United States, the screening shall take place before boarding and shall be carried out by a Federal Government employee (as defined in section 2105 of title 5, United States Code), except as otherwise provided in section 44919 or 44920 and except for identifying passengers and baggage for screening under the CAPPS and known shipper programs and conducting positive bag-match programs."

Airline and airport employees have no experience performing these duties and have not received the hours of training TSOs are required to complete. It is not clear that these employees were vetted by their employer to the same extent as the TSO workforce. Instead of diverting resources by inserting employees who do not work for TSA into the framework of aviation security, AFGE calls on Congress to provide the funding to fully staff airport checkpoints.

Transportation Security Officers do all they can to detect any person or anything moving through checkpoints that might cause harm to passengers. It should not be so hard for them to simply do their jobs. AFGE pledges to work with TSA, Congress, and the public on solutions that address the agency's problems in a manner that improves passenger experiences and the ability of TSOs to carry out their duties. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you at this hearing, and I look forward to responding to any questions you might have regarding my testimony.

Mr. KATKO. Thank you, Mr. Cox, for your testimony. We appreciate you being here today.

Before I recognize myself for 5 minutes of questions, I do want to note that it is very interesting that the part-time employee attrition rate is nearly triple that of full-time employees at TSA. That is something I want to talk to you about in a few moments' time.

I now recognize myself for 5 minutes of questions.

One of the overarching observations from speaking to you last week all at the panel, two things: Expansion of TSA is critically important, and also it was a revelation to all of us that field service directors really have their hands tied to some extent with respect to making staff and allocation decisions and oftentimes are not interacting in an appropriate manner with the airports and airlines in the field.

So our bill addresses all of those things. But I do want to flesh them out a little bit. I will start with the TSA PreCheck program.

Ms. Callahan, you stated that 40 percent now of the Syracuse Airport is on PreCheck.

Ms. CALLAHAN. That is correct.

Mr. KATKO. What type of an impact has that had on the airport and the throughput of passengers?

Ms. CALLAHAN. We are seeing wait times on average of anywhere between 12 and 15 minutes. When I flew out this morning, I had a first experience at seeing that, and it really has helped to balance the distribution of PreCheck and non-PreCheck employees during those peak periods, which for us is really 4:30 until about 7 a.m.

Mr. KATKO. Right.

Now, for any of you who can answer this question. There are discussions at times that PreCheck isn't always open, and I have experienced that myself and it is frustrating to me, being Chairman of this subcommittee. But is it fair to say that if PreCheck were expanded dramatically, like it is intended to be, that it would allow those lanes to be open on a more regular basis because the staffing would warrant it? Is that correct? Anyone want to answer that?

Ms. PHILPOVITCH. No, I think that the point is good that especially when customers enroll in PreCheck. The enrollment rates tend to be higher the more frequently the customers travel, and they build that expectation of having PreCheck available into their schedules in terms of what flights they book and when their meetings end and the like. It is a service that the TSA is selling, that people are paying for. So people are incredibly frustrated, customers, when they come and find those lines closed.

The screening procedures in PreCheck are much faster, so the transaction time per customer is lower. Therefore we can get many more customers through the checkpoint, both safely, securely, and efficiently, the more people are in PreCheck. So we are a big fan of expanding it as well.

Mr. KATKO. Okay. Thank you.

I take it all of you are. Is that right? Yes. You are all nodding your head. It seems self-evident.

Mr. COX. Mr. Chairman, I think the one issue that we constantly find, PreCheck is helping, but as we have continued decrease in staffing, that continues to perpetuate the problem. No matter whether we have PreCheck or not, the real issue is that we have to have adequate staffing in TSA.

Mr. KATKO. It is understood. But it is fair to say, is it not, Mr. Cox, that if you had 20 million people enrolled in PreCheck Nation-wide, or 30 million people enrolled in PreCheck Nation-wide, and you have the throughput for PreCheck individuals are double the time it is for others, it would have less stress on the system? You have to acknowledge that.

Mr. COX. It would definitely have less stress on the system. But if we keep losing 5,000 every several years, that is going to have stress on the system.

Mr. KATKO. That is something we need to address for sure.

Now, with respect to the field service directors, it was really shocking to me that they weren't interacting with some of the airports, especially the major airports, on a regular basis with respect to the staffing allocation models.

So, Ms. Beirsto, could you comment on that for a moment, if you would, please?

Ms. BEIRSTO. Sure. We have a strong and favorable partnership with our local TSA. However, when it comes to staffing allocation model, we encourage TSA to provide greater transparency so we, airports and our airline partners, can better plan and schedule around staffing shortages and the like.

Mr. KATKO. All right. I am sorry. I referred to them as field service directors, and my able staffer told me: Hey, dummy, it is Federal service directors—Federal security directors, excuse me.

But one of the things we propose in the bill is that you take the FSDs, if will you, and basically mandate that they meet with the airport directors and airlines on a regular basis and that they discuss staffing allocation models and then certify to us that they are actually doing that. We are asking that to be done on both the local level and on the National level. We are hoping that is going to have an impact on it.

Now, Ms. Callahan, I understand from speaking to you earlier last week that you do that now on a regular basis. Is that right?

Ms. CALLAHAN. Yes, sir, we do. In fact, we had a meeting yesterday with our Federal security director and his assistants from Albany all the way to Buffalo, a meeting held in Syracuse. Forty of the airports in New York State were at that meeting where we had an in-depth, detailed briefing on their plans for the summer travel season, how we can work together and collaborate to address some of the issues.

My FSD oversees 14 airports. So to see him on a monthly basis is really incredible, that he has the time to do that. But he is very responsive and reactive to issues.

Mr. KATKO. That is good. One of the things we want to do in this bill is to untie their hands to some extent from an administrative standpoint, because I believe that they need to have more flexibility with respect to their decisionmaking authority on the front lines.

If you get a call from American Airlines or from Chicago and they say, "Lookit, we are going to get crushed over the next 3 days, we just sold a bunch of tickets," whatever, let's work together, figure out how to do that. They have got to be able to have the flexibility to grant more overtime. They have got to have the flexibility to be able to bring more people in.

So that is part of what we are contemplating in this bill, and it is based on our discussions with all of you. So I appreciate that.

Now, Mr. Cox, one of the things I have been thinking about, when you were talking about some of the staffing issues and the attrition rate, is if there is some money that is reallocated, if that is the right term, from other parts of TSA to staffing, would it

make sense to take a lot of these individuals that are part-time now and make them full-time and in so doing you thereby reduce the attrition rate considerably, for some of them at least?

Mr. COX. Yes, sir, that would definitely help with that situation. Administrator Neffenger spoke with me yesterday and said his attrition rate with full-time TSOs was around 7 to 8 percent, but, again, it is over 20 percent in the part-time.

People want full-time employment. They will go to other Federal jobs or other jobs in the airport seeking full-time employment. So moving that money to getting them full time would definitely help fix a lot of the problems.

Mr. KATKO. Okay. Of course the added benefit during this crisis, if you will, that we are having at airports is that moving someone from part-time to full-time doesn't take any additional training.

Mr. COX. No, sir, that doesn't. They are ready to go. Many of them in peak times are already working 40 hours a week or possibly more than 40 hours a week. So they are ready to go. There is a cap that has been put on the number of full-time employees. So if Congress could fix that, that would help with a lot of the situation.

Mr. KATKO. All right. Thank you very much, Mr. Cox.

I have so many more questions, but I can't go over my time too much here.

So I now recognize the Ranking Member, Mr. Payne, for 5 minutes of questions.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I ask unanimous consent that 2 letters from AFGE to President Obama and Secretary Johnson be inserted in the record.

Mr. KATKO. Without objection, so ordered.*

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you.

Ms. Beirsto, in response to the issues at your airport and others around the Nation, Secretary Johnson and Administrator Neffenger announced plans to address the lines, including additional resources. Has the administration's response to the wait times within your airports been effective and has it had a positive effect? To this point, I hear a lot that we have the additional resources coming in but have not heard how it has impacted your wait times in a positive manner, if it has.

Ms. BEAIRSTO. Sure. It has. TSA has provided 58 additional officers. The shift of moving over 160 part-time officers to full times helped TSA address the peak periods both in the a.m. shifts and the p.m. shifts. Tripling the amount of overtime allows them to open checkpoints early so they are not behind the curve. Adding morning shifts for TSA screeners and the additional K-9 teams at O'Hare from around the country has proven incredibly helpful. The K-9 teams alone are allowing us to move roughly 5,000 passengers a day through PreCheck.

Mr. PAYNE. Okay. So what would you say the wait times as opposed to what they were are now, specifically?

Ms. BEAIRSTO. Sure. So at Midway Airport the wait times with K-9 teams can be 20 to 30 minutes during peak periods. Without

*The information was not submitted at the time of publication.

them, they can reach of 69 to 90 minutes. We are seeing a great impact on the K-9s. Thank you for asking.

Mr. PAYNE. Yeah. I have Newark International in my district, and we really have had the same experiences you have been having in Chicago based on the hub that we are. Also with the Port Authority having 3 airports under its purview has been a major hang-up with the wait times. We have had the resources moved in Newark as they have in Chicago and it has dramatically impacted the ability to move passengers in a timely manner.

Ms. Allin, within your testimony you note that the BDOs could be useful in other positions within the screening model. Could you expound for the committee on your thoughts on achieving efficiencies through using the Behavior Detection Officers?

Ms. ALLIN. Thank you, Representative Payne.

Yes, sir, the Behavioral Detection Officers are trained in perceiving people who are going to do something that is not correct, or it may be illegal, may be trying to smuggle something, potentially terrorist ties. By having them as the ticket document checkers, they have a personal connection to every single passenger that goes through and they can screen each individual. As opposed to standing to the side or the back of the line where they are observing behavior, they can better detect people who may need additional screening or discussion.

Mr. PAYNE. Okay. Thank you.

Ms. ALLIN. This is a model that is used overseas that has been quite effective there.

Mr. PAYNE. Okay. My time is winding down, but I just wanted to say to Mr. Cox, all throughout this discussion over the past several weeks that I have kept the TSOs in mind and have made sure that my colleagues have some idea of what they go through and the strain that they are under based on these long wait times as well. They are our last line of defense, and we need to make sure that they have the resources that they need in order to do the job well. We can't afford them not to. They have to be right 100 percent of the time.

So I just wanted to put that on the record. I yield back.

Mr. KATKO. Thank you, Mr. Payne.

The Chair will recognize other Members of the subcommittee, and then Ms. McSally, for 5 minutes of questions that they may wish to ask the witnesses.

In accordance with our committee rules and practice, I plan to recognize Members who are present at the start of the hearing by seniority on the subcommittee and then others, such as Ms. McSally, who are visiting the committee this morning. Those coming in later will be recognized in order of their arrival.

The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Georgia, Mr. Carter, for 5 minutes of questions.

Mr. Carter.

Mr. CARTER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank all of you for being here. This is obviously a very important subject to us. I am glad to see you all because I have some important questions I want to ask you.

I have the honor and privilege of representing the First Congressional District of Georgia. That includes the entire coast of Georgia.

Georgia is unique in the sense that we have a lot of small airports, a lot of rural areas. We also, as you know, have Hartsfield-Jackson Airport, which is the busiest airport in the country, in the world. That presents a dilemma. But I want to ask you some questions about that, and I am very interested to know your responses to this.

What we have been hearing and what I have been hearing from a lot of the airport officials is that there exists somewhat of a disconnect between the local TSA officials, the airlines, the airport officials, and then upper management, that management in TSA up here in Washington, DC, if you will. Have any of you experienced that? Can you comment on that? Ms. Allin or whoever wants to comment. Just very quickly, because I have a bunch here.

Ms. CALLAHAN. Yes, Mr. Carter. I think it is really each airport is different. There is a saying in our industry: You have seen one airport, you have seen one airport. So the relationships that exist are really local and dependent on the people within the organizations at those airports. I imagine in Atlanta it is much more difficult than in it is Syracuse, New York, where we have access to our FSDs and AFSDs and the airlines on a regular day-to-day basis. That is what I can offer.

Mr. CARTER. Okay.

Anyone else?

Ms. ALLIN. Representative Carter, Tucson previously had an FSD until 2 years ago, then we became a spoke airport. We have an excellent relationship with our local screening managers and our local personnel. They now have many layers to go through. Models and requirements are dictated, and I can't personally say from where, but certainly above their ability to be able to react quickly to issues on the ground. That is what we experienced during our peak period in February and March. They were only allowed to open the PreCheck lane after they had opened a second standard lane because of staffing. Then they could open a PreCheck lane.

When they opened the PreCheck lane the lines were cut in half and they were not the full length of our terminal front. So having the ability to do that would be helpful.

Mr. CARTER. Okay. Great.

Let me ask you, has anyone had any experience with private security? Any of you who have had that experience?

Ms. PHILPOVITCH. In a few airports that we serve have private security.

Mr. CARTER. I am sorry. Say again?

Ms. PHILPOVITCH. Sorry. Oh, thank you.

A few of the airports that American serves have private security.

Mr. CARTER. Can you give me your impression? I mean, what have been the results?

Ms. PHILPOVITCH. I will just use San Francisco as an example, because that is probably the one I am most familiar with. Because the privatized airports, the way the privatized model is today, follows the same procedures and staffing allocation models as other airports.

Mr. CARTER. Okay, I hope that my colleagues heard that. They have to follow the same rules and regulations.

Ms. PHILPOVITCH. Right.

Mr. CARTER. The training is the same. Everything is the same. TSA oversees it, correct, oversees it?

Ms. PHILOPOVITCH. Correct. That is my understanding.

Mr. CARTER. All right. I am sorry. Continue.

Ms. PHILOPOVITCH. So we really see that as long as the operation is properly resourced we are able to have both effective and efficient screening in either model. Really the key is making sure that the resource allocation meets the peak needs of the operation.

Mr. CARTER. Okay.

The Screening Partnership Program. Mr. Cox, I am going to ask you directly, can you give me an idea of why, it appears to me and from what I have heard, that they do a better job and that they save money on top of that? You had any experience with this?

Mr. COX. Sir, we believe that the TSOs that are employed by the Federal Government, No. 1, it is a professionalized workforce, they do a great job, they have been trained to do that. I think the record speaks very clearly for themselves. Since 9/11, we have not had acts of terrorism in this country. We had a privatized workforce on 9/11 and we saw what happened, this country was brought to its knees. The Government has been taking care of that, been doing that. Part of our real problem right now is a lack of staffing, not enough staff to do the work properly.

Mr. CARTER. I understand and I appreciate what you are saying, but at the same time, I am convinced that the private industry can do this just as well with oversight with TSA and save money and improve customer service and decrease the long lines that we are experiencing at our airports. They go through the same training. The TSA still has the oversight, the responsibility.

I think it is unfair to compare what happened on 9/11 between privatization and being run by the public. I mean, that took us all. We were all asleep at the wheel then, you have to admit that.

Mr. COX. I agree. I was watching Fox News last Sunday and one of the commentators was at the San Francisco Airport, was complaining about the long lines, the rudeness of the officers, and the various incidents that were going on and said, this is a classic example of why it needs to be privatized. I busted out laughing because it is a privatized airport and all the problems that she was referring to were at a privatized airport. She wasn't in Atlanta or Miami, one of those that was not privatized, she was in San Francisco complaining, saying it was a classic example of why it should be privatized.

Mr. CARTER. Well, what I would like to see are some comparisons. I mean, this is something that is very important and if we can improve it—because you mentioned the disconnect—or I brought up the disconnect and you commented on the disconnect between Washington and the local officials. This is something that we have got to work on. This is what happens when the bureaucracy gets out of control. That is I think we are headed with and we are at right now with the TSA, is the bureaucracy out of control. We need to get it under control.

Mr. Chairman, I know I have gone past my time, but this is just a very important subject to me.

So I appreciate your input on that.

Mr. Cox, what you are telling me, I am having different views expressed to me by other people, so I am going to continue to search on this and continue to try to see what we can come up with.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back. Thank you.

Mr. KATKO. Thank you, Mr. Carter.

I ask unanimous consent that the gentlelady from Texas, Ms. Jackson Lee, be allowed to sit on the dais and participate in this hearing.

Without objection, so ordered.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Let me express my appreciation to the Chairman and the Ranking Member for your courtesies. This is a committee that I have a great affection for because I indicated before that the TSOs are the first line of defense, if you will, for the neighborhood, for the Nation's aviation security. So let me thank all of you for your presence here.

I have some direct questions and then I want to raise a series of questions with Mr. Cox. Thank you very much for representing very fine professional staff, which I want to be more professional, less part-time, more recruitment, increased salaries, and the numbers that you would like to have.

So I would ask the representative from Chicago, Illinois, the admiral was here just yesterday, and I understand that the wait has gone to 15 minutes. I would like to see what—you are obviously here today, Thursday—I would like to hear your assessment. Have the lines improved, the time and the waits improved?

Ms. BEIRSTO. Oh, considerably, ma'am. We have seen wait times less than 15 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. So there has been a fix, if you will, and obviously we have to see that it is a consistent fix.

Ms. BEIRSTO. A permanent fix.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. That is even better, to hear that it is a permanent fix. He has added more, as I understand, there is a task force and he has added more employees. Is that correct?

Ms. BEIRSTO. May I correct? It is temporary right now. We need a permanent fix.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. So you were saying we need a permanent fix?

Ms. BEIRSTO. Right.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Well, that will come. The temporary is that you added more personnel. Is that correct?

Ms. BEIRSTO. Yes, the extended overtime allowed for increased shifts in peak periods.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Are you aware that we expect about 700 to be in by July, and so you would probably get some additional TSOs?

Ms. BEIRSTO. I am aware. Thank you.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. That would probably help their circumstances.

Is there a problem with the baggage check down—there is a screening and then there is a baggage check. Is there a problem on the baggage check area as well?

Ms. BEIRSTO. It has not surfaced at our level. We can certainly find out additional information and follow up.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Thank you. But the problem has been at least relieved for a moment and we expect to continue to work with you for that.

Ms. BEAIRSTO. Midway Airport is still waiting for additional resources.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Additional resources.

Would you say that your TSOs are professional, your management level?

Ms. BEAIRSTO. Yes, absolutely.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. They were attempting to correct the problem?

Ms. BEAIRSTO. Yes, absolutely.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. All right. Thank you.

I see that there are other airports. There is an airline representative here, I think, from American Airlines. Have you been able to work by way of getting your concerns to TSA, should we facilitate a better communication protocol when there are concerns?

Ms. PHILPOVITCH. You know, we have been working very collaboratively and effectively with the TSA, both at the headquarters level with Admiral Neffenger, as well as at the local level. So the airlines are taking action in collaboration with the TSA and also promoting many of the actions that the TSA is suggesting and already taking and also the actions that are contained in Chairman Katko's proposed legislation, which we are in favor of as well.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Which means that you would be willing to pay for overtime for TSOs?

Ms. PHILPOVITCH. You know, right now we really want to get more transparency into the staffing model and understand how resources are being deployed. We need to make sure that we have an analytical model that puts resources where they need to be to meet the peak demands of our customers.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. I agree with you. More flexibility for the FSDs, would that be helpful?

Ms. PHILPOVITCH. In cooperation with their airline partners, yes.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Would you join with us, because I heard the point being made that we need more data regarding the baggage fees? So I think there should be an assessment and a study coming from both ends, the airlines and TSA, on the baggage fees as to whether or not they do increase the number of bags coming through by hand-carry. Would you work with us on that?

Ms. PHILPOVITCH. May I comment on the checked baggage in general?

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Uh-huh.

Ms. PHILPOVITCH. The airlines have been charging checked baggage fees since 2008, and the line waits we are experiencing with TSA this year are unprecedented. So I think it would be inaccurate to say that bag fees are leading to the current line waits that we are experiencing.

You mentioned the baggage—

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Can I interject for a moment? We note that we have had a sizable increase in passenger travel between 2008—already between 2011 and 2016. My only question is, we all have our different perspectives. I am not offering any perspective. I am just offering, would you participate and collaborate on getting the data that we need to understand the question better?

Ms. PHILPOVITCH. We are interested in collaborating to solve the problem.

I do want to note that baggage screening, as you noted, is also a core function of TSA. Even though we had heard from my colleague from Chicago that we haven't had severe issues there, some of our other airports have experienced significant backlogs, in some cases even worse than what we are experiencing at the checkpoints—

Ms. JACKSON LEE. What we want to do is fix the problem.

Ms. PHILPOVITCH [continuing]. Like in Miami and Los Angeles.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Right. We want to fix the problem. I know that you have hubs like Miami. So we want to fix the problem.

Let me quickly move to Mr. Cox, if I might.

Mr. Cox, I have traveled to many of your airports. I take the opportunity to speak to TSOs everywhere I go, including supervisors and managers. I will say that I ran into one individual, his name is Vincent, who is a World War II veteran, came, and was in a wheelchair, was dropped off by his family, he was traveling by himself. He said, "I don't want anybody else. I want a TSO, TSO, TSO." That means to come out to the curb.

So a TSO went out to the curb and took him with the wheelchair all the way through security, et cetera, et cetera, getting to the gate, getting down to the door of the plane. He noted that this proud World War II veteran who had been dropped off by his family members, I am sure they meant well, he could not walk. Your TSO agent lifted him up and took him and took him and put him on the plane.

I think these are the stories that need to be told. If the Chairman would yield me just a moment here.

Mr. KATKO. Ms. Jackson Lee, just to let you know, we are kind of crunched for time and Ms. McSally needs to go too.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. May just get this last question in?

Mr. KATKO. Votes are coming up, so please hurry.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Yes, thank you.

I support a professional staff, not privatization. Would you respond to that quickly, please?

Mr. COX. We clearly believe that a professional staff that are Government employees, that this is an inherently Governmental function to keep the American public safe. These people are well-trained, they do a great job, they love their jobs, they just need to have adequate staffing to be able to do their jobs and to do them properly.

I think if the committee really wants to get legislation that tries to get the input and the collaboration, that it would be important that AFGE and the employees that it represents be included in the legislation as one of the partners trying to resolve the problem.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Thank you.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you so very much. More funding is important.

I yield back, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member. Thank you.

Mr. KATKO. Thank you, Ms. Jackson Lee.

The Chair now recognizes the patient Ms. McSally from Arizona.

Ms. McSally.

Ms. MCSALLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

In the roundtable last week and in your testimony today we heard one of the main issues is flexibility for the FSDs, that they can make decisions on the ground, but not just for the FSDs, for the supervisors in spoke airports like Tucson.

Admiral Neffenger was asked this question yesterday, and he said he has given the flexibility to FSDs. I felt like I was listening to parallel universes that were in complete contradiction of each other. He believed that they already have that flexibility. It is unbelievable to me that it would take an act of Congress to actually direct them to provide flexibility. This is just leadership 101.

But he sincerely believes he has given that authority. I specifically asked him yesterday about this and the spoke airports like Tucson, and he said they have all the authority they need. Maybe they are not just getting the message. He just recently removed Kelly Hoggan, who potentially is the barrier to this direction being communicated down to all of you.

But I want to say, we need your immediate feedback. He gave his promise yesterday that he was going to follow up on this and made sure they understood his guidance that they had that flexibility.

Ms. Allin, can you share? You have given some examples. If we had the flexibility with our senior TSA rep on the ground in the last few months, what other instances? Were their hands tied? What would have changed? What have you been able to do there in order to alleviate the problems that we are having?

Ms. ALLIN. Thank you, Representative McSally.

When we were experiencing the extreme lines, the challenge that our local representative with TSA had, which is not an FSD, as we are a spoke, as you noted, was the fact that there are specific models. A certain throughput of passengers per hour have to go through the lane before the second lane can be opened up, and that with one standard lane, then a second standard lane had to be opened before PreCheck, where PreCheck is the quick resolution because the lane was cut in half when the PreCheck lane was opened.

Ms. MCSALLY. That direction you think came from the District of Columbia or Phoenix? Do you know?

Ms. ALLIN. Phoenix came down when the passengers were calling the media from the lines and the media began showing up. It all exploded during the week and that is when things changed.

Ms. MCSALLY. Right. Is that still the case? Do they have to do the second line before PreCheck?

Ms. ALLIN. With staffing, yes, ma'am. They are limited on staffing and therefore can't open the PreCheck, because it requires more people—and I am sorry, I can't tell you exactly how many more—than the standard lane.

Ms. MCSALLY. Okay. Great. Are there any other situations where you saw their hands were tied, that they could have maybe moved, say, BDOs to be checking IDs or something else had they been given more flexibility locally?

Ms. ALLIN. Yes, ma'am. We have been asking for BDOs to be document checkers since the problems first started with the holidays prior to our season coming. Our FSD in Phoenix refused, saying that it was important for them to be observing the line, the people

in line, as opposed to being able to be document checkers. I think all that is changed by the admiral and we appreciate that greatly.

Ms. MCSALLY. Okay. Great. Thanks.

Ms. Beirsto, you said you appreciated the assistance. There was big media attention to the problems at Chicago and then additional agents and K-9 teams came to the rescue. However, they were pulled from somewhere else.

What we heard from the roundtable last week is the feeling that this sort of squeaky wheel, let's move assets around to whoever is on TV today, allows, I think one of the airport managers said, something along the lines of we all get a turn to be the worst, is that kind of model, which means that you are just going to create a crisis somewhere else.

So I am concerned about that, that this is more like a whack-a-mole scenario as opposed to a strategic model that is going to address all these issues and we are not going to be robbing from medium and small airports in order to address the bigger airports that end up on TV.

Can anyone sort-of provide some perspectives on that and concerns that we shouldn't be reactive, we should be much more strategic on this?

Ms. BEAIRSTO. If I can give an example, ma'am. The passenger screening K-9s, for example, which we borrow and have been re-allocated from other airports, those kinds of resources really need to be allocated based on airport passenger throughput and the security risk, right? So those are the kinds of things that TSA should consider.

Ms. MCSALLY. Great. Thank you.

Mr. Cox, yesterday I asked Admiral Neffenger about something that was really troubling that I discovered this week, which is we have instances of at least 250 through April that have been reported where TSA agents have been pulled away from their primary mission, which is the security of air travel and the efficiency and safety of passengers and air travel, to support things like Presidential campaign rallies. We have heard reports of other events, concerts, and sporting events. This is nowhere in their core competency.

So could you please comment on your perspectives on whether, when somebody signs up to be a TSA agent and a TSO, whether they expected to be at a campaign rally or whether they expected to be doing their core mission and how you all feel about that?

Mr. COX. We expected them to do their core mission, to do their core work. As with any situation, you do understand the workers don't get to drive the train, they just show up and do what the bossman tells them to do.

I know our TSOs, they want to be at the airport doing their mission and taking care of it. It upsets them when those lines are long and passengers are waiting because passengers get more frustrated with them.

I would say, if you really want to resolve a lot of these problems, you can talk to FSDs, you can talk to the administrator, but Congress probably needs to mandate that there be some work groups made up of TSOs themselves. The people who actually do the work

can tell you how to improve the processes. I know American Airlines does that all the time. I know all these airports do that.

We need to be talking to the front-line employees and they could give a lot of solutions. They can't necessarily give more resources or more people, but I am sure they know how to improve the work processes.

Ms. MCSALLY. Great. Thank you. I agree with you. Look, we need to make sure that large-scale events have safety and security, but there are other ways to do that than to be pulling agents, that its core responsibility is the safety of air travel, in order to do that. So I will be following up on that.

I appreciate the leverage, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. KATKO. Thank you, Ms. McSally.

I would like to thank the witnesses for their thoughtful testimony. Members of the committee may have some additional questions for all of you, and we will be asking you to respond to those in writing. Pursuant to committee Rule VII(E), the hearing record will be held open for 10 days.

Before we close, a couple of observations. First of all, if we had more time we could go on on this all day long. But what is the beauty of this hearing was that we had the input of all of the stakeholders at the table and those sitting in the audience last week, which helped us become very prepared for this testimony.

I think a lot of times people look at Congress and say, Congress is broken, nothing gets done, they are not listening to us. I think what has transpired over last week is that we looked at a crisis, we got the stakeholders in here, we listened to you, we crafted a bill responding to what you have to say, and it is going to have immediate an impact if we can get it passed. I am excited about that.

The frustration is that we are moving these things and we are getting this stuff done. So I ask all of you to be advocates with the Senate to tell the Senate to do their job as well, because we don't want to hear any more of these wait time issues.

When we can act like this in a collaborative manner, that is when Congress really works. We have to make sure that process comes to a positive conclusion.

So thank you all for coming here. I know it is an early flight for some of you. If it is any consolation, we were working until about 12:30 last night and I was up at 5 this morning. So we have all had busy days.

So thank you all very much.

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Chairman.

Mr. KATKO. Sure.

Mr. PAYNE. Just an observation before we close.

Ms. McSally, you should have not left Homeland. I see you more now.

Ms. MCSALLY. I am on Homeland. I just gave up the Chair of the other subcommittee to move over to another subcommittee.

Mr. PAYNE. Well, we miss you there.

Ms. MCSALLY. I am here, baby.

Mr. PAYNE. All right.

Mr. KATKO. The committee stands adjourned. Thank you all so very much.

[Whereupon, at 10:28 a.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

