



A bold voice for transportation workers

September 30, 2013

Cosponsor H.R. 1455, the Contract Screener Reform and Accountability Act

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO (TTD), I urge you to cosponsor the Contract Screener Reform and Accountability Act (H.R. 1455). This legislation will implement changes to the Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) contract screening program in order to strengthen aviation security and to institute a more balanced evaluation process for private screening companies.

Too often, front-line federal Transportation Security Officers (TSO's) are demonized and scapegoated for simply doing their jobs and implementing policies dictated by TSA leadership. In this environment, calls for turning over more TSA screening responsibility to the private sector becomes a convenient and all too predictable rallying cry from those who believe that government is always the problem or who want to enrich certain private contractors. The truth is that federal TSO's have served our nation and its aviation system well in an extremely difficult time and working environment. And contracting out is not the advertised elixir that many claim and in fact creates oversight and security issues that must be addressed.

In fact, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) recently found that TSA has failed to ensure proper oversight of private companies that provide passenger and baggage screening services and to conduct the proper analysis of private versus federal screener performance. Additionally, existing law does not do enough to ensure that only qualified and trusted entities are providing security service at our nation's airports. Specifically, under current law, there is a process for subsidiaries of foreign-owned corporations to obtain contracts for screening and take over these important jobs.

In order to ensure that TSA sufficiently oversees private screeners, H.R. 1455 would require security breaches at airports with contracted screening services to be reported to TSA officials. The bill would provide better accountability and transparency by preventing any screening services to be performed by a subcontractor. The bill also takes steps to guarantee that TSA has the ability to adequately judge the effectiveness of private screeners. It would mandate covert testing of contract screeners so that their performance can be monitored and compared to that of federal screeners and impose penalties on those that would compromise these tests. It would also require airports that utilize private screeners to communicate this fact to the flying public and require private companies to track and report all passenger complaints.

Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO

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Edward Wytkind, President / Larry I. Willis, Secretary-Treasurer



In addition, this bill takes steps to ensure that current federal screeners are treated fairly if an airport chooses to privatize its screening services and that such contracts are awarded appropriately. Besides prohibiting foreign-owned companies from obtaining screening contracts, the bill would mandate that private companies provide existing personnel the right of first refusal to jobs and offer compensation and benefits equal or greater than what they receive at the time of privatization.

I urge you to cosponsor this important legislation that will enhance the oversight of private screening activities at our nation's airports, and help support the current screener workers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Edward Wytkind', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Edward Wytkind
President