



A bold voice for transportation workers

January 28, 2020

Give Transportation Security Officers the Federal Rights they Deserve

Vote YES on the Rights for Transportation Security Officers Act

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO (TTD), I urge you to vote YES on H.R. 1140, the Rights for Transportation Security Officers Act when it is considered by the House Homeland Security Committee during tomorrow's mark-up. This bipartisan legislation will provide 45,000 Transportation Security Officers (TSOs) with the same worker rights that cover other federal employees and have done so without interfering in the delivery of important government services.

Passengers and transportation workers rely every day on the critical safety and security role that TSOs play in our increasingly mobile society. Unfortunately, while TSOs experience the same challenges as the larger federal workforce, they are denied important federal workers rights due to a brief statutory footnote included in the Aviation and Transportation Security Act (ATSA) passed in 2001. This footnote has been incorrectly interpreted by the courts and administrative bodies as giving the Transportation Security Administrator the authority to pick and choose whether, and how, Title 5 federal worker rights and protections apply to TSOs.

As a result, TSOs are denied many of the basic federal worker rights and protections that are afforded to virtually all other federal employees, including other Transportation Security Administration (TSA) workers and those in intelligence agencies. As an organization that represents other critical safety workers, including air traffic controllers and aviation safety specialists, TTD believes that worker rights and protections need not be sacrificed in the name of safety or security. In fact, the denial of these rights and protections only contributes to dysfunctional operations at TSA and the consistently low scores the agency receives on employee morale and worker satisfaction surveys.

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Larry I. Willis, President / Greg Regan, Secretary-Treasurer



H.R. 1140 would repeal the TSA Administrator's authority to maintain the existing unequal personnel system that applies only to TSOs, and require TSA to provide the workplace rights and protections granted to other federal employees under Title V. The bill would also grant TSO's access to the Merit Systems Protection Board – a neutral arbiter in workplace discipline matters that nearly all federal employees have access to, including TSA management and administrative personnel. Finally, the bill would put TSOs on the general pay scale with regular step increases.

TSOs bear the heavy burden of keeping our airways, mass transit systems, and large public gatherings safe. They have proven their dedication repeatedly, including during the recent government shutdown when they continued to do their duty despite not knowing when their next paycheck would arrive. It is past time for Congress to end the unequal personnel system they are subject to, and grant them the rights and protections they deserve. I urge you to votes YES on H.R. 1140.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Larry I. Willis".

Larry I. Willis
President