

INTRODUCTION OF THE “RIGHTS FOR TRANSPORTATION SECURITY OFFICERS ACT OF 2016”

HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 8, 2016

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, today, I join with Representative NITA LOWEY (D-NY) to introduce the “Rights for Transportation Security Officers Act of 2016,” legislation to ensure that the dedicated men and women that serve on the frontlines at our Nation’s airports have receive the rights and protections afforded to their counterparts within the Department and the Federal government.

When the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) was established in 2002, in response to the September 11th attacks, Congress acted swiftly to transfer responsibility for security screening at airports from the private sector to the Federal government. We did so with the expectation that a system-wide approach would be taken to protecting our Nation’s vital aviation sector and the passengers that are its lifeblood. Over the years, Congress has come to realize that some of the flexibilities that were provided to TSA when it was established were too broad and warranted refinement. For instance, when Congress recognized that TSA’s exercise of acquisition flexibilities was not yielding the outcomes that TSA and the flying public need, TSA was required to comply with the Federal Acquisition Regulation, just like most other Federal agencies. We are introducing the “Rights for Transportation Security Officers Act of 2016,” because we believe that the time has come for TSA’s personnel and labor management systems to be brought into compliance with the longstanding Federal systems and protections afforded to Federal workers under Title 5.

TSA has had its fair share of challenges, particularly with respect to its personnel services. Repeatedly, there have been instances where TSA’s personnel system at attracting, retaining, and developing talent has fallen short. And with respect to labor management, the promise of the 2011 determination by then-TSA Administrator John Pistole has not lived up to its promise, insofar as the labor union that was elected as the exclusive representative for the Transportation Security Officer workforce can only bargain and represent workers in limited cases and issues in dispute that may be raised to a neutral third party are limited.

The fight for basic worker protections for Transportation Security Officers has been a long one. These dedicated individuals serve honorably on the front lines, protecting us from those who want to do us harm through our aviation sector. Back in 2007, we came close to ensuring that Transportation Security Officers would be put under Title 5 but a veto threat from then-President Bush all but closed the door to getting the fix. When President Obama took office, the TSA workforce and many of us in Congress were hopeful that under new leadership, workers would get the rights and protections that had been denied to them for years. However, now that we have seen successive TSA Administrators fail to address longstanding unsettled workforce issues, it is imperative that Congress come together

and enact legislation that will grant the workforce rights and benefits that they deserve.

I hope that other Members will join myself and Representative LOWEY and support this important legislation.

INTRODUCTION OF SEAT EGRESS IN AIR TRAVEL (SEAT) ACT

HON. STEVE COHEN

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 8, 2016

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, today, I introduce the Seat Egress in Air Travel (SEAT) Act. This bill would direct the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to establish minimum seat size standards for passenger seats on aircrafts operated by carriers in the U.S. for the health and safety of passengers.

Consumers are tired of being squeezed—both physically and fiscally. The average distance between rows of seats has dropped from 35 inches before airline deregulation in the 1970s to about 31 inches today. The average width of an airline seat has also shrunk from 18 inches to about 16½.

This isn’t just a matter of comfort. It is about safety and health. The FAA requires that planes be capable of evacuation in 90 seconds or less, but the FAA hasn’t conducted emergency evacuation tests on airlines with a distance between rows of less than 29 inches. Some airlines fly with rows as close as 28 inches apart. Furthermore, doctors warn of deep vein thrombosis which can afflict passengers who don’t move their legs enough on longer flights.

Moreover, average seat sizes have been shrinking while the average size of Americans has been growing. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the average man in 1960 weighed 166, and the average woman weighed 140 pounds. Now the average man is 196 pounds and the average woman is 166 pounds—and both are about an inch taller.

This just doesn’t make any sense. I hope that Congress will quickly act on this bill to direct the FAA to establish minimum seat size standards to provide appropriately for the safety and health of airline passengers.

INTRODUCTION OF THE “MAKING YOUR RETIREMENT ACCESSIBLE ACT” OR THE “MYRA ACT”

HON. JOSEPH CROWLEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 8, 2016

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to introduce, along with Congressman KEITH ELLISON, the “Making Your Retirement Accessible Act,” also known as the “myRA Act,” to help address the savings and retirement security crisis in America.

Here are a few startling facts:

According to a 2015 Federal Reserve Report, 31 percent of non-retired individuals said they have no retirement savings or pension whatsoever.

Among workers who do not participate in a 401(k) or other defined contribution plan, 42

percent say that is because their employer does not offer one.

For part-time workers, it can be even more difficult, as a 2015 BLS Economic Release found that 62 percent of part-time workers don’t have access to a retirement plan at work.

To address this looming crisis, the Obama Administration recently launched the myRA program to help workers who face obstacles to saving, such as by not having access to an employer-sponsored retirement plan or not having enough in personal funds to purchase and contribute to their own IRA.

The myRA program allows workers to open their own retirement savings account with as little as \$1, and gives them the ability to make automatic payments every pay period.

Employers would only be responsible for setting up a payroll deduction for employees to create and deposit funds into their individualized myRA accounts.

myRA accounts not only encourage workers to build a nest egg for their future, but also give workers peace of mind that they can access these funds in emergencies.

Under the myRA program, participants can withdraw funds from their account tax-free and penalty-free—so these funds can be used as an emergency rainy-day fund as well as a future retirement account, further breaking down a barrier against savings.

The funds invested go solely into U.S. Government savings bonds, ensuring these accounts remain stable, not at risk in the market.

Further, the accounts do not have any associated maintenance charges or fees, which means every dollar that is invested will be returned—plus interest—to the account holder.

Recognizing most Americans will have a number of jobs in their lifetime; myRA accounts are also portable, allowing employees to change jobs while still being able to easily maintain their accounts.

The Administration has taken an important step forward by using their existing legal authority to create this program. I salute them for their actions in creating this program.

The myRA program represents an important saving tool, and as such it should be welcomed as more than just an administrative program—it should be codified into law.

Today, Congressman ELLISON and I are taking that next step to ensure this worthwhile program can continue, allowing everyone in our country to plan ahead for a secure retirement for themselves and their families.

SENATE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Title IV of Senate Resolution 4, agreed to by the Senate of February 4, 1977, calls for establishment of a system for a computerized schedule of all meetings and hearings of Senate committees, subcommittees, joint committees, and committees of conference. This title requires all such committees to notify the Office of the Senate Daily Digest—designated by the Rules Committee—of the time, place and purpose of the meetings, when scheduled and any cancellations or changes in the meetings as they occur.

As an additional procedure along with the computerization of this information, the Office of the Senate Daily Digest will prepare this information for

printing in the Extensions of Remarks section of the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD on Monday and Wednesday of each week.

Meetings scheduled for Tuesday, February 9, 2016 may be found in the Daily Digest of today's RECORD.

MEETINGS SCHEDULED

FEBRUARY 10

10 a.m.

Committee on Environment and Public Works

To hold an oversight hearing to examine the importance of enacting a new Water Resources Development Act.

SD-406

Committee on Foreign Relations

Business meeting to consider S. Res. 99, calling on the Government of Iran to fulfill its promises of assistance in the case of Robert Levinson, the longest held United States civilian in our Nation's history, S. Res. 361, urging robust funding for humanitarian relief for Syria, and S. Res. 330, congratulating the Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet for winning the 2015 Nobel Peace Prize; to be immediately followed by a hearing to examine United States policy in Central Africa, focusing on the imperative of good governance.

SD-419

Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

Business meeting to consider H.R. 3572, to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to reform, streamline, and make improvements to the Department of Homeland Security and support the Department's efforts to implement better policy, planning, management, and performance, S. 1526, to amend title 10 and title 41, United States Code, to improve the manner in which Federal contracts for construction and design services are awarded, to prohibit the use of reverse auctions for design and construction services procurements, to amend title 31 and 41, United States Code, to improve the payment protections available to construction contractors, subcontractors, and suppliers for work performed, S. 236, to amend the Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2010 to create an expedited procedure to enact recommendations of the Government Accountability Office for consolidation and elimination to reduce duplication, S. 1411, to amend the Act of August 25, 1958, commonly known as the "Former Presidents Act of 1958", with respect to the monetary allowance payable to a former President, S. 795, to enhance whistleblower protection for contractor and grantee employees, S. 2450, to amend title 5, United States Code, to address administrative leave for Federal employees, S. 2418, to authorize the Secretary of Homeland Security to establish university labs for student-developed technology-based solutions for countering online recruitment of violent extremists, S. 2340, to require the Director of the Office of Management and Budget to issue a directive on the management of software licenses, H.R. 3361, to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to establish the Insider Threat Program, S. Res. 104, to express the sense of the Senate regarding the success of Operation

Streamline and the importance of prosecuting first time illegal border crossers, H.R. 1656 and an original bill entitled, "Secret Service Improvements Act of 2015", to provide for additional resources for the Secret Service, and to improve protections for restricted areas, an original bill entitled, "DHS Acquisition and Accountability Reform Act", an original bill entitled, "Combat Terrorist Use of Social Media Act of 2016", an original bill entitled, "Federal Property Management Reform Act of 2016", an original bill to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to build partnerships to prevent violence by extremists, an original resolution directing the Senate Legal Counsel to bring civil action to enforce a subpoena of the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, and the nomination of Beth F. Cobert, of California, to be Director of the Office of Personnel Management for a term of four years.

SD-342

Committee on the Judiciary

To hold hearings to examine mental health and the justice system.

SD-226

10:30 a.m.

Committee on Appropriations

Subcommittee on Department of Defense

To hold hearings to examine proposed budget estimates for fiscal year 2017 for the Air Force.

SD-192

Committee on Finance

To hold hearings to examine the President's proposed budget request for fiscal year 2017.

SD-215

2 p.m.

Committee on Finance

To hold hearings to examine the President's proposed budget request for fiscal year 2017.

SD-215

2:30 p.m.

Special Committee on Aging

To hold hearings to examine a new scam by global drug traffickers perpetrated against our nation's seniors.

SD-562

FEBRUARY 11

9:30 a.m.

Committee on Armed Services

To hold hearings to examine the National Commission on the Future of the United States Army in review of the Defense Authorization Request for Fiscal Year 2017 and the Future Years Defense Program.

SD-G50

Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

Subcommittee on Regulatory Affairs and Federal Management

To hold hearings to examine agency discretion in setting and enforcing regulatory fines and penalties.

SD-342

10 a.m.

Committee on Appropriations

Subcommittee on Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies

To hold hearings to examine emerging health threats and the Zika supplemental request.

SD-138

Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs

To hold hearings to examine the semi-annual Monetary Policy Report to the Congress.

SD-538

Committee on Finance

To hold hearings to examine the President's proposed budget request for fiscal year 2017.

SD-215

Committee on the Judiciary

Business meeting to consider S. 247, to amend section 349 of the Immigration and Nationality Act to deem specified activities in support of terrorism as renunciation of United States nationality, S. 483, to improve enforcement efforts related to prescription drug diversion and abuse, S. 524, to authorize the Attorney General to award grants to address the national epidemics of prescription opioid abuse and heroin use, and the nominations of Elizabeth J. Drake, of Maryland, Jennifer Choe Groves, of Virginia, and Gary Stephen Katzmann, of Massachusetts, each to be a Judge of the United States Court of International Trade.

SD-226

10:15 a.m.

Committee on Foreign Relations

To hold hearings to examine the nominations of Karen Brevard Stewart, of Florida, to be Ambassador to the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Robert Annan Riley III, of Florida, to be Ambassador to the Federated States of Micronesia, and Matthew John Matthews, of Oregon, for the rank of Ambassador during his tenure of service as United States Senior Official for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Forum, all of the Department of State, and Swati A. Dandekar, of Iowa, to be United States Director of the Asian Development Bank.

SD-419

1 p.m.

Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe

To hold hearings to examine an update on the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, focusing on religious freedom, anti-Semitism, and rule of law.

HVC-210

2:30 p.m.

Select Committee on Intelligence

To hold closed hearings to examine certain intelligence matters.

SH-219

FEBRUARY 23

10 a.m.

Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

To hold hearings to examine the President's proposed budget request for fiscal year 2017 for the Department of the Interior.

SD-366

2:30 p.m.

Committee on Armed Services

Subcommittee on Strategic Forces

To hold hearings to examine the Department of Energy atomic energy defense activities and programs in review of the defense authorization request for fiscal year 2017 and the Future Years Defense Program.

SR-232A

FEBRUARY 25

1:30 p.m.

Committee on Indian Affairs
 To hold hearings to examine the Tribal Law and Order Act 5 years later, focusing on the next steps to improve justice systems in Indian communities.
 SH-216

MARCH 2

10 a.m.

Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
 To hold an oversight hearing to examine the Federal Communications Commission.
 SR-253

MARCH 3

10 a.m.

Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs
 Subcommittee on Securities, Insurance, and Investment
 To hold hearings to examine regulatory reforms to improve equity market structure.
 SD-538

Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

To hold hearings to examine the President's proposed budget request for fiscal year 2017 for the Department of Energy.
 SD-366

MARCH 8

10 a.m.

Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
 To hold hearings to examine the President's proposed budget request for fiscal year 2017 for the Forest Service.
 SD-366

MARCH 9

2 p.m.

Committee on the Judiciary
 Subcommittee on Antitrust, Competition Policy and Consumer Rights
 To hold an oversight hearing to examine the enforcement of the antitrust laws.
 SD-226