

Association for Airline Passenger Rights (AAPR)

PO Box 15275

Washington, DC 20003

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July 20, 2011

The Honorable Darrell Issa, M.C.
Chairman
House Committee on Oversight & Government Reform
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Abuses by the Transportation Security Administration (TSA)

Dear Chairman Issa,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Association for Airline Passenger Rights (“AAPR”) and its board of directors to express our strong displeasure with the Transportation Security Administration (“TSA”) and the routine abuses against airline passengers in the United States. As Chairman of the House Committee on Oversight & Government Reform you have been extremely critical of the TSA and its poor performance, and as such AAPR wanted to offer its support to you.

The mission of the Association for Airline Passenger Rights is to promote fairer customer service and accessibility standards in the airline industry and to improve passenger satisfaction. Our purpose is to educate policymakers on travel-related information important to airline passengers, improve accessibility for passengers with disabilities and protect the consumer rights and responsibilities of airline passengers.

Dating back to November 2010, AAPR has aggressively called on the TSA to discontinue the use of their pat-down searches, as well as questioned the use of their enhanced body imaging scanners. AAPR contends that the pat-down searches violate privacy protections afforded to airline passengers under the U.S. Constitution’s 4th Amendment, but they also are not an effective means to ensure airport security nationwide.

Additionally, AAPR has expressed strong reservations about the enhanced body imaging scanners for medical reasons, especially in light of the concerns brought to light by scientists at the University of California at San Francisco. As you may know, they expressed their concerns about the “potential serious health risks” of the scanners; in a letter to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (“FDA”), they raised a number of “red flags” as well as specific concerns raised by dermatologists and cancer experts.

In an effort to improve air travel and air safety, AAPR strongly supports the following immediate reforms:

- Offer incentives for more airports to opt-out of using the TSA for their security screenings;
- Prohibit the TSA federal employees from being allowed to unionize;
- Expedite traveler pre-screening programs for frequent travelers (Trusted Traveler Program);
- Identify viable alternatives to pat-down searches and enhanced body imaging scanners; and
- Require the TSA Administrator to report to Congress quarterly on efforts to remedy ongoing abuses.

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With so many challenges facing today's aviation industry – including the growing dissatisfaction among the flying public – it is critically important that our government and its respective security agencies facilitate a balance between security and individual rights. Unfortunately, numerous techniques currently being employed by the TSA have tilted that balance against airline passengers, while not improving overall security (as evidenced by the recent report that airport security was breached 25,000 times since 2001).

AAPR is expressly concerned with reports of the TSA's abusive treatment during the security screening process toward passengers with disabilities, seniors, and Veterans and their families.

Your colleague, Rep. John Mica of Florida summarized it best when he said, “We've created an agency that's run pell-mell away from security and turned into huge unthinking, non-risk-based bureaucracy,” Mica said. “Everywhere I turn I'm appalled at what's taking place.” AAPR agrees with his assessment and therefore we would welcome the opportunity to work with you and the Committee to end these TSA abuses against airline passengers.

Whether it is seeking consumer input, or witnesses at hearings, AAPR is here to assist you in this effort. Please free to contact me by phone at (305) 519-4256 or email at info@flyfriendlyskies.com should you desire any additional information about the TSA from the airline passenger perspective. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Brandon M. Macsata
Executive Director