

**United States Senate
Commerce, Science, and Transportation
Hearing of the Subcommittee on Security**

**The Honorable Roger Wicker Chairing
*Promoting Safe Skies through Scanning and Screening:
Oversight of Air Cargo Security*
Thursday, February 24, 2020**



**Testimony of
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Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Cantwell and Members of the Committee:

My name is Jennifer Ritter and I am here representing the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA with 50,000 of aviation's first responders at 20 airlines. I am a Flight Attendant at United Airlines and on September 11, 2001. I lost my good friends and my profession changed forever. But even as we grieved, we were comforted by Flight Attendants who had formerly flown at TWA and Pan Am during the loss of flights 800 and 103 respectively. They helped us cope and have hope that we could make it through the grief that made it hard to breathe and made us wonder if we could ever find a new normal. We bonded in our grief and also in our commitment to work every day to close loopholes in aviation security.

When Flight Attendants go to work, we do so trusting that every function of security is working up to the aircraft door. We are aviation's last line of defense. We need the proper tools, training, staffing, and communications to perform our work and thwart any onboard security threats. But we cannot do anything about threats to our lives and those in our care outside of the aircraft cabin. Senator Markey knows well in his nearly two decades of work with us that 100% cargo screening is critically important to Flight Attendants. If we can't be sure this is done and done properly, we are in essence adding tremendous risk to our lives over a security loophole that is out of our control. That is not right and we urge this committee to take a very close look at this issue.

Our Flight Attendant union supports of the 100% screening of cargo to be loaded on passenger aircraft. We have worked on this issue in the TSA Aviation Security Advisory Committee Air Cargo Working Group and of course we are proud to have worked with Senator Markey while he still served in the House of Representatives to make this law. In order to maintain this standard and ensure it is fully implemented, we support continued development and deployment of advanced cargo inspection technology.

Canine inspection is an important part of screening, but it must be done right. We are fully supportive of the Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) own canine inspection teams for air cargo. We have many concerns, however, about 3rd Party Canine (3PK) inspection services or those 3PK companies effectively self-inspecting to meet TSA Standards for canine

team training, care and rest periods.

We understand proper funding and resources must be allocated for TSA to adequately perform security screening required by law. AFA supports the Faster Act (S. 472), which would ensure aviation security service fees pay for the costs of security screening.

In addition to cargo screening, we support the Cyber AIR Act (S. 2181) which would help protect from and require disclosure of any attempt or successful cyber-attacks.

Adequate Long-Term Funding

Effective passenger, baggage, and cargo screening is a vital part of our layered defense against terrorism in the skies. It is also a difficult job with massive responsibility. TSA must have the consistent, long-term funding to close all potential security loopholes and give screeners the staffing, support and training they need to do their jobs to help keep our skies safe and secure.

Government shutdowns result in weakened aviation security. The Senate Homeland Security Committee estimates that the 35-day Government Shutdown cost the DOT 2,413 years in worker productivity¹. This created a gaping hole in aviation security and it cannot ever be repeated by even a day.

We also oppose diverting funding and resources from TSA to other security initiatives, such as border security. Reduced staffing at checkpoints isn't just an inconvenience—when TSA is stretched thin, it increases the risk of a serious security breach.

Flight Attendants often bear the brunt of travelers frustrated by any inefficiencies in security screening, making our workspace more volatile. We urge lawmakers to ensure funding is adequate and stable to maintain the successful mission of TSA.

¹ Shutdown cost DOT, DHS thousands of years in lost productivity, POLITICO Pro, <https://t.co/O3478qNmFc?amp=1>, September 17, 2019

Conclusion

We thank the Chairman, the Ranking Member and the Members of this Subcommittee for this opportunity to testify. We are proud of our work as aviation's first responders and the last line of defense in aviation security. As the great labor leader Mother Jones said, "Mourn the dead and fight for the living." We commit to you to do this every day and we appreciate your attention and oversight on such a critical matter for us as crew, and the people who trust us with their lives when they fly.