



U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

Washington, DC 20515

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I am writing you and other aviation authority members to request your consideration of converting your airport's current aviation security screening from Transportation Security Administration (TSA) screeners to a certified private screening program as provided under a provision which was included as part of the original transportation security law. Under this program, TSA continues to set standards, pay all costs, and conduct performance oversight.

As you may know, I was one of the authors of the Aviation and Transportation Security Act (ATSA) that created the TSA. When the TSA was established, it was never envisioned that it would become a huge, unwieldy bureaucracy which was soon to grow to 67,000 employees. As TSA has grown larger, more impersonal, and administratively top-heavy, I believe it is important that airports across the country consider utilizing the opt-out provision provided by law.

Since the law's implementation, we began the private screening program with five initial airports in each airport size category where screening was provided by certified private screening firms under federal supervision. Currently there are 17 airports that are operating in a similar fashion. In addition, several airports in the state of Montana and in other locations are seeking to utilize the opt-out provision. It is my intention to assist airports in converting to this screening program in order to reform and institute better, more efficient, and more effective screening operations. Hopefully you and other members of your airport authority will consider converting your security operations to this improved model.

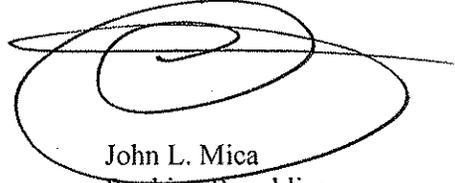
Airports that are considering conversion usually express concern about three matters which I would like to address in turn. First, to the matter of cost, let me assure you that airport authorities will incur no additional expenses. The contract is with TSA and the TSA remains responsible for screening costs. Second, concerning airport involvement, there are several models of implementation, allowing airports different levels of involvement depending upon the local needs and interest. Under one model, the airport authority can be actively involved in providing the screening services. Lastly, concerning liability, the airport's legal exposure is well protected in law.

Past studies have indicated that private screening operations' performance is equal to, or "statistically significantly better than" the all-federal operations. Furthermore, almost all of the positive innovations that have been adopted by the TSA in the screening process have emanated from private screening operations. You may be interested to know that private screening operations at the original pilot program airports: San Francisco International Airport, Kansas City International Airport, Greater Rochester International Airport, Jackson Hole Airport, and Tupelo Regional Airport, have and continue to operate with very high performance levels.

At the federal level, I will be making every effort to encourage the utilization of the Screening Partnership Program. It is both inappropriate and inefficient for the TSA to serve as the administrator, quality assurance regulator, operator and auditor of its own activities. Most comparable international airport systems operate with a public/private screening operation under government supervision and regulation. Better performance, customer service and more efficient operations can be achieved at reduced costs if this system is adopted and properly implemented both at your airport and across the country.

My Aviation Subcommittee staff would be pleased to assist you should you move forward with a decision to opt to have a certified private screening program at your airport. Please feel free to contact me, or the Aviation Subcommittee Staff Director Holly Woodruff Lyons and Professional Staff member Bailey Edwards at 202-226-3220, should you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

John L. Mica
Ranking Republican