



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 108th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 2003

House of Representatives

HONORING THE DEDICATED EMPLOYEES OF THE
TRANSPORTATION SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

SPEECH OF

HON. PETER A. DEFAZIO

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 6, 2003

Mr. **DeFAZIO**. Mr. Speaker, recent incidents and undercover investigations have highlighted deficiencies in our nation's aviation security system. It is important, however, to remember how much things have improved since September 11th. How soon we forget about security on the cheap. It was only a few years ago that the screener of the year testified before the Aviation Subcommittee that he was only able to keep his job because he had additional income and wasn't dependent upon his screener salary. McDonalds was considered a step up for most screeners, turnover was 400 percent at some airports, and private security companies even had felons screening passengers and luggage.

After September 11th, everything changed. We now have dedicated, well-paid professionals protecting the traveling public each and every day. I want to take a moment to thank the hard working employees of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) who have dedicated themselves to improving security at our nation's airports. I recently received an e-mail from Daniel Bernath, a TSA employee at Portland International Airport, that I would like to insert in the Record.

It was nice meeting with you for a few moments as you got your plane ticket at United Airlines at PDX. I'm the TSA officer who thanked you for your work in aviation security. . . . As TSA officers we see the holes and potential problems in aviation security and are troubled by them. I have reported several to my superiors at TSA. . . . The TSA officers are proud to be serving our country even though the job is extremely physically tiring and dangerous (we are looking for explosives, knives and guns, and up to one third of us have been injured. . . . one suffered a heart attack last month, another TSA officer suffered a stroke at PDX). I have no trouble falling asleep at night because, I, like all TSA officers, am completely physically exhausted at the end of my watch. . . . The TSA rank and file is a very impressive bunch and I am proud to be one of them and again wear my country's uniform and I hope that your fellow Congressmen are proud of us too; we are all highly educated—many have college degrees (I have a juris doctor), many have management experience and we are all there after 9.11 to protect our fellow Americans. We are there to defend our country and unlike the screeners before the attack, it is not just "a job" to us. At least three times a day a fellow American will watch me search her bag and say "we're really glad the TSA is here—thank you." I remind them that we took an oath to protect the United States and point to our TSA emblem which has 9 stars and 11 stripes in the flag, symbolizing the reason for our creation and our mission that it never happen again; the attack on the United States on 9.11. I think our physical presence and professional demeanor helps our fellow Americans feel comfortable about flying again. . . . Daniel A. Bernath TSA at PDX."

Mr. Bernath's e-mail says it best, "the TSA rank and file is a very impressive bunch, I am proud to be one of them and again wear my country's uniform and I hope that your fellow Congressmen are proud of us too." I agree with Mr. Bernath, TSA employees are an impressive bunch and, although there is always room for improvement, I am very proud of the work they are doing. I want to thank Mr. Bernath and his fellow TSA employees who come to work each day dedicated to protecting the flying public. I hope my colleagues in Congress will join me in doing all we can to make sure they succeed in this mission.