

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 11, 2013

Dear Colleague:

We write to urge your support of the letter below to the Administrator of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), raising serious concerns regarding TSA's recent announcement of its decision to allow passengers to bring knives and certain sports equipment into the passenger compartment of an airplane.

On September 11, 2001, hijackers on board United 93, United 175, American 77, and American 11 took over these planes using mace, box cutters and knives to attack passengers and crew. While the federal authority responsible for aviation safety and security at the time, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), did not expressly prohibit knives with blades shorter than 4 inches in length, the checkpoint operations guide, developed by the airlines in consultation with the FAA, explicitly permitted them.^[1] After these deadly terrorist attacks of 9/11, all knives and dangerous sporting equipment, like pool cues, were placed on a list of prohibited items and banned from planes.

After 9/11, Congress acted and passed the *Aviation Transportation Security Act* (ATSA), which established TSA and provided a screening workforce of federal employees responsible for passenger safety and baggage security. In 2004, Congress passed the *Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act* of 2004 (P.L. 108-458), which granted TSA's Administrator the authority to modify the list of items that would be prohibited from planes.^[2]

TSA's most recent decision to change the prohibited items list by allowing passengers to bring certain small knives and sporting equipment onboard planes, appears to have been determined without any formal engagement with stakeholders impacted by this policy, including those people most likely to come into contact with a person possessing a knife on a plane – flight crewmembers and air marshals. This lack of consultation is unfortunate, in light of existing processes and mechanisms to engage with crewmembers, such as the Aviation Security Advisory Committee. Previously, ASAC played a role in the development of security policies and protocols. TSA's failure to use ASAC to review this new policy is an indication that all relevant voices were not heard before this decision was made.

Opposition from the Coalition of Flight Attendant Unions, the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association, and the Coalition of Airline Pilots Associations is further indication that those most likely to be impacted by the decision to allow passengers to bring small knives and certain sports equipment on planes should be involved in the decision-making process.

Please join us in requesting that TSA refrain from implementing its announced policy change of permitting previously prohibited items on planes and urge the Administrator to utilize existing mechanisms to engage with all relevant stakeholders before enacting significant policy changes that impact the frontline workforce and the flying public. If you would like to sign on, or if you have any questions, please contact Andrew Ginsburg in Rep. Swalwell office at andrew.ginsburg@mail.house.gov or Chris Berardini in Rep. Grimm's office at chris.berardini@mail.house.gov.

The deadline to sign on is COB Tuesday, March 19.

Sincerely,

/s
Eric Swalwell
Member of Congress

/s
Michael Grimm
Member of Congress

/s
Bennie Thompson
Member of Congress