



AMERICAN FEDERATION OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, AFL-CIO

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July 21, 2026

The Honorable Ted Cruz
Chairman
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science,
and Transportation
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science,
and Transportation
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Cruz, Ranking Member Cantwell, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO (AFGE), which represents approximately 45,000 Transportation Security Officers (TSOs) at more than 400 commercial airports, I respectfully urge the Committee to reject the nomination of David Cummins to serve as Administrator of the Transportation Security Administration.

Mr. Cummins' July 16 testimony and written answers confirm he is wrong for this role on three important questions: respect for the workforce's rights, protection of the post-9/11 security screening model, and relevant security experience.

First, Mr. Cummins rejects the collective bargaining rights of the officers he would lead. He told senators that the TSO contract "hinders" the mission under the guise of "national security." In his written responses, he asserted that TSA would operate more efficiently without a collective bargaining agreement. This is both wrong and reckless. A federal court has twice ruled against the Department's attempts to dissolve that agreement, most recently blocking that attempt in January. That contract, paired with 2023 pay reforms, cut TSO attrition nearly in half – prompting then-Administrator David Pekoske, a Trump appointee, to warn that without it the country might not have a TSA in five or ten years. A nominee who would dismantle the very tool that stabilized this workforce would reverse hard-won security gains.

Second, Mr. Cummins is an advocate for privatizing security screening and moving away from the post-9/11 security screening model that Congress wrote into law. He embraced a budget that would cut 8,400 TSO jobs and, pointing to the Screening Partnership Program (SPP), stated that TSA is "aggressively pushing the expansion of the SPP program" on the false premise that private contractors who rely on government funding are immune from shutdowns. The danger is no longer hypothetical. Yesterday, Des Moines International and Tampa International became the first airports to opt into TSA's "Gold+" model. This new program would authorize a private contractor to manage both the screening workforce and the checkpoint technology, with TSA reduced to oversight. These commitments were made before TSA had even set the final rules for the program or selected a contractor.

Handing operational control of the machines that detect explosives and weapons to private vendors is a radical departure from 25 years of bipartisan aviation security policy. Privatization suppresses wages, invites the runaway turnover that made the pre-9/11 private contractor model notorious, and erodes the public accountability that federal service guarantees. Every departure is



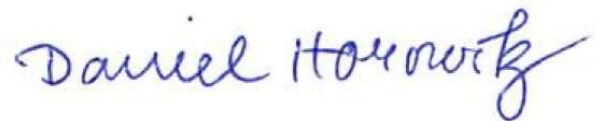
a training cost, and every gap is a security risk. Officers at Des Moines, Tampa, and any airport that follows would be pushed out of federal careers they signed up to build. This is precisely the instability a serious Administrator should be preventing, not accelerating.

Third, Mr. Cummins lacks the security background this position demands. Nearly every previous Senate-confirmed TSA administrator brought significant transportation security experience. Administrator David served as Vice Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard. Administrator John Pistole served as Deputy Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Administrator James Loy served as Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard. Mr. Cummins' own questionnaire cites only private-sector contracting roles and the 2002 Winter Olympics. With the summer travel season underway, the 2028 Summer Olympics approaching, and the conflict with Iran ongoing, TSA cannot afford on-the-job training in its top security post.

TSOs have endured the two longest government shutdowns in American history, working 43 days without pay in late 2025 and another 75 days during the 2026 DHS funding lapse. Officers slept in their cars, sold their own plasma, and received eviction notices while screening nearly three million passengers a day. More than 2,100 trained officers left TSA in under seven months in response to the shutdowns. They deserve a leader worthy of their sacrifice and service – not one who would strip their rights, contract out their jobs, and learn aviation security on the fly.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to reject Mr. Cummins' nomination and encourage the Administration to nominate a candidate with a demonstrated record of effective leadership, workforce engagement, and commitment to TSA's mission. Thank you for your consideration. I appreciate the Committee's continued oversight of TSA and its commitment to protecting the nation's transportation systems.

Sincerely,



Daniel Horowitz
Legislative Director

