

Read the pro-trans letter from Congress to the TSA here

By Cristan Williams

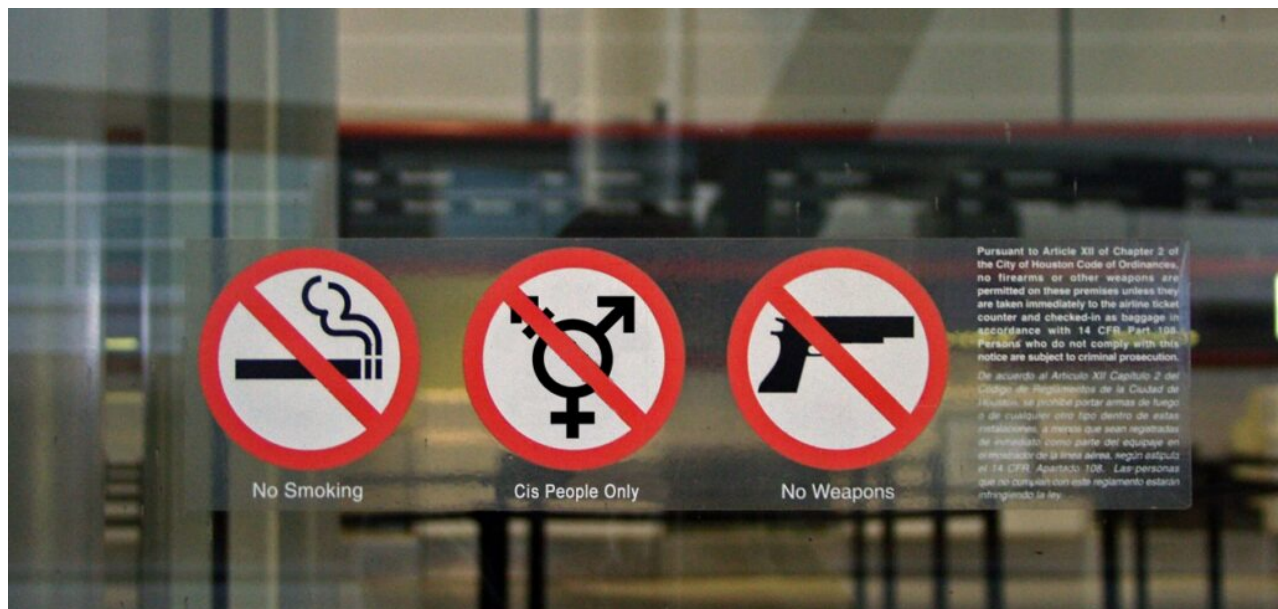
Published July 11, 2018 | Updated September 2, 2018

https://www.transadvocate.com/read-the-pro-trans-letter-from-congress-to-the-tsa-here_n_23789.htm

Abstract

We have written before about the humiliating ways the TSA have sometimes interacted with trans and intersex bodies. Apparently, some in the US Congress have become concerned about this ongoing problem. Last month, Representatives Pramila Jayapal (WA-07) and Joe Kennedy III (MA-04) requested information regarding the agency's treatment of transgender travelers in a letter to Transportation [...]

Article



We have written before about the humiliating ways the TSA have sometimes interacted with trans and intersex bodies. Apparently, some in the US Congress have become concerned about this ongoing problem. Last month, Representatives Pramila Jayapal (WA-07) and Joe Kennedy III (MA-04) requested information regarding the agency's treatment of transgender travelers in a letter to Transportation Security Administration (TSA) Administrator David Pekoske.

As you may know, in 2015, the National Center for Transgender Equality surveyed 28,000 transgender individuals, 53 percent of whom had indicated that they had flown within the prior 12 months. Of them, 43 percent responded reported having had negative experiences passing through TSA. This is an

unacceptably high rate. Some travelers reported that TSA agents instructed them to remove clothing to the point where they are nearly naked. Others have reported being groped and publicly humiliated,” wrote the members. “TSA Acting Administrator for Civil Rights Christine Griggs and Deputy Assistant Administrator Stacey Fitzmaurice testified before the House Committee on Homeland Security’s Transportation and Protective Security Subcommittee on February 27, 2018. While their testimony did reference the issues facing transgender travelers, we request additional information... more must be done to ensure our nation’s homeland security without compromising the civil rights of transgender passengers.

Jayapal and Kennedy were joined by 30 members of Congress.

June 26, 2018

Administrator David Pekoske
Transportation Security Administration
601 12th St S
Arlington, VA 20598

Dear Administrator Pekoske:

We are writing to request information regarding the Transportation Security Administration’s (TSA) treatment of transgender travelers. There have been several documented or reported incidents during which transgender travelers experienced discrimination or harassment with transportation security officers (TSOs) and/or the screening process.

As you may know, in 2015, the National Center for Transgender Equality surveyed 28,000 transgender individuals, 53 percent of whom had indicated that they had flown within the prior 12 months. Of them, 43 percent responded reported having had negative experiences passing through TSA. This is an unacceptably high rate. Some travelers reported that TSA agents instructed them to remove clothing to the point where they are nearly naked. Others have reported being groped and publicly humiliated.

Unfortunately, the scanner technology TSA uses requires TSOs to choose between two buttons on the machine based on their impressions of someone’s gender expression. Unsurprisingly, this can result in the machine identifying “anomalies” that flag the traveler for additional screening. This can make them vulnerable to harassment or assault, as well as potentially being outed to other travelers.

We understand TSA has taken some steps to improve their processes and the experiences of all travelers. The TSA Cares initiative, for example, allows travelers to call with any questions they may have in advance of the TSA screening process. Additionally, we know that the agency has created videos to further educate and prepare travelers who will be passing through security, and that TSA has worked with stakeholders to improve their processes and training materials. However, more must be done to ensure our nation’s homeland security without compromising the civil rights of transgender passengers.

We are pleased that TSA Acting Administrator for Civil Rights Christine Griggs and Deputy Assistant Administrator Stacey Fitzmaurice testified before the House Committee on Homeland Security’s Transportation and Protective Security Subcommittee on February 27, 2018. While their testimony

did reference the issues facing transgender travelers, we request additional information answering the following questions:

1. Ms. Griggs testified that vendors are demonstrating screening machines and technology updates that would move the TSA away from binary screenings. However, she could not provide a timeline for when TSA may implement them. When can we expect to see U.S. airports using them? Does TSA intend to adopt machines that are gender-neutral, if it continues to rely on scanners as the primary search tool?
2. After consulting with stakeholders, what changes have been made to training materials? How have these changes been communicated to TSOs already employed in airports? Have all current TSOs been retrained on the policies that were updated in 2017?
3. Some transgender travelers report a lack of consistency and clarity about the processes in place. What additional measures are you taking to educate travelers and conduct outreach to the transgender community?
4. Is TSA considering the inclusion of less invasive measures like explosives trace detection or canines to address the concerns of transgender travelers?
5. When travelers file a complaint, to whom are such complaints directed, and what is the process for review? Please provide a detailed explanation.
6. When travelers report complaints, what does TSA do to attempt to resolve these issues, and what exactly constitutes a resolution? How many complaints has TSA received from transgender travelers for each of the past ten years? Has there been a decline since TSA reviewed and updated its processes?
7. What is the most effective way for transgender travelers to engage with TSA about reforming this process to ensure the screening process protects their rights and treats them with respect?

We understand that homeland security is TSA's top priority. However, we believe that meaningful efforts can be made to find solutions that are both safe and just. All travelers deserve to be treated respectfully--with their civil rights upheld--during their travels. Thank you for your attention to these issues, and we appreciate you responding to our concerns within 30 days.

Suggested citation

Cristan Williams. "Read the pro-trans letter from Congress to the TSA here." TransAdvocate, July 11, 2018.
https://www.transadvocate.com/read-the-pro-trans-letter-from-congress-to-the-tsa-here_n_23789.htm