



More Lawmakers Demand TSA Probe

Utah's Republican Representative Jason Chaffetz and Maine's Republican Senator Olympia Snowe have each undertaken the task of probing the security policies of the Transportation Security Administration.

Representative Chaffetz, who is expected to become the chairman of the House oversight subcommittee responsible for the federal workforce, addressed a letter to President Obama demanding that he conduct an investigation into the procedures taken by the TSA, particularly as related to an incident involving a little boy. According to the letter, a Utah Valley University student, Luke Tait, recorded a young boy having his shirt removed to prove that the father was not carrying any dangerous substances.



In an interview between Tait and the Associated Press, Tait explained that he felt it behooved him to take the [video](#) of the now notorious incident at the Salt Lake International Airport because he realized something crazy was going on. In an effort to avoid allowing the TSA to touch the little boy, the child's father complied with the TSA by removing the boy's shirt.

[Fox News](#) writes, While the kid and his father were allowed to go through security, TSA agents came over and questioned Tait about his videotaping the incident and ordered him to delete the video. He refused, but was allowed to go to his gate, where, Chaffetz says, TSA agents sat near him and communicated through walkie-talkies until he boarded his flight.

In the letter to Obama, Chaffetz wrote that the actions do not speak well of the TSA.

He added, Surely it is possible to secure an airplane without sacrificing individual liberties or privacy. We can utilize bomb-sniffing dogs, AIT machines as a method of secondary screening, and behavioral profiling to accomplish the shared goal of safe and secure air travel.

TSA responded to the incident in a blog saying that travelers will no longer be asked to and should not remove clothing (other than shoes, coats, and jackets) at a TSA checkpoint. If you're asked to remove your clothing, you should ask for a supervisor or manager.

Chaffetz's letter bears strong similarities to those concerns cited by Senator Snowe in a letter she addressed to TSA Administrator John Pistole. In her letter, Snowe stated that she wants further information on the procedures taken by airport security to confirm that there is in fact a careful balance between protecting individual safety and preserving individual privacy.

According to Fox News, Snowe said she was concerned about the training methods after hearing reports that the pat-down process was being implemented differently across the nation.

In the letter to Pistole, Snowe wrote, These new searches are a novel procedure both for the traveling



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public and your front line TSA officers, and I am not convinced the Transportation Security officers have received adequate training in what is clearly an invasive procedure.

Snowe also insisted that Pistole respond to her later no later than December 13.

Chaffetz and Snowe are not the first lawmakers to stand up to the TSA.

Similarly, [lawmakers in New Jersey](#) have teamed up with local chapters of the American Civil Liberties Union to stand up to the TSA. The legislators asked Congress to review the procedures taking by TSA workers to screen passengers for flights. They have also called upon the state Senate and Assembly to confront Congress to review the constitutionality and effectiveness of the invasive procedures.

New Jersey state Senator Michael Doherty is leading the effort and asked New Jersey Governor Chris Christie to have Attorney General Paula Dow evaluate the use of the naked-body scanners and enhanced pat-downs to determine whether the procedures violate New Jerseys privacy laws.

Doherty emphasized, When you buy an airline tickets, you do not give up your constitutional rights.

Last week, Floridas Republican congressman [John Mica](#) wrote a letter to 100 of the nations busiest airports urging them to opt for private security screeners instead of those of the TSA. Mica asserts that the quality of customer service would likely improve under the private sector, and views the transition to private companies as a step in the right direction, as private companies could best determine how to provide adequate security.

Chaffetz would likely agree with Micas recommendation, as he asserts that the TSA has become too big to run efficiently.

Theyre now a big personnel agency. Theyre trying to manage tens of thousands of people. When they implement things like the pat-down and this new technology, its been a disaster. Everybodys complaining about it. And they never consulted Congress it wasnt properly done, reports Chaffetz.

Perhaps the best example of lawmakers taking a stance against the TSA is the introduction of the [American Traveler Dignity Act](#) by Texas Republican Congressman Ron Paul.

According to Paul, [The Act] establishes that airport security screeners are not immune from any US law regarding physical contact with another person, making images of another person, or causing physical harm through the use of radiation-emitting machinery on another person. It means they are subject to the same laws as the rest of us.

Paul declared, "Something has to be done. Everybody's fed up. The people are fed up. The pilots are fed up. I'm fed up Enough is enough."

Despite the public outcry by both American citizens and politicians, White House spokesman Robert Gibbs continues to defend the procedures. He claims that the introduction of the new procedures has affected only about 1 percent of the 34 million people whove been through TSA screening since the implementation of the new rules.

He also claims that children under age 12 will be put through modified screenings, though he admits that the new rules have not been implemented in the best way.

If somebody feels as if they have been unduly subjected to something that they find to be far more invasive than the line of convenience and security, they should speak to a TSA representative at the airport. TSA is trying desperately to strike that balance. That will evolve the evolution of the security will be done with the input of those that go through the security, says Gibbs.



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Photo: Republican Majority Transition Chairman Rep. Greg Walden, R-Ore., left, and Rep. Jason Chaffetz, R-Utah, right: AP Images

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