

Travel Watch List Error Redress Bill Introduced in Senate

2008-08-06

The National Business Travel Association (NBTA) praised the introduction in the U.S. Senate of S. 3392, the Fair, Accurate, Secure and Timely or FAST Redress Act, calling it a major step forward for business travelers who are regularly subjected to secondary screening because they are wrongly placed on terrorist watch lists or their names are similar to people on the watch lists. NBTA urges the Congress to enact this common sense legislation during the remainder of this Congressional session.

The bill was introduced with bipartisan support from sponsor Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) and cosponsors John Thune (R-SD), Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Claire McCaskill (D-MO), and George Voinovich (R-OH). S. 3392 is identical to legislation, H.R. 4179 that was passed by the U.S. House of Representatives on June 18, 2008, with significant support from NBTA and its members and chapters. Representative Yvette Clarke (D-NY), sponsor of the House bill, addressed several thousand attendees at last week's NBTA International Convention & Exposition in Los Angeles, thanking them for NBTA's support for her legislation and urging Senate action.

'NBTA and the business travel community congratulate Senators Klobuchar, Thune, Leahy, McCaskill, and Voinovich for introducing the FAST Redress Act in the Senate,' said NBTA Executive Director & COO Bill Connors, CTC. 'These leaders recognize that an efficient and effective redress system for travelers who are unnecessarily flagged for secondary screening will make travel more convenient and productive for those individuals. Cleaning up misidentifications also will allow the Transportation Security Administration to more effectively use limited airport screening resources.'

In June, participants in the NBTA Annual Legislative Summit met with their home state and district members of Congress to advocate support of FAST Redress. The next week the measure passed the House. NBTA has engaged members in a grassroots campaign to boost support of the measure in the Senate, including meetings between NBTA members and the offices of three of the bill's original sponsors and cosponsors: Sen. Klobuchar, Sen. McCaskill and Sen. Voinovich.

St. Louis Business Travel Association Chairman Jim McMullan, said, 'It's so exciting to know that we are helping to advance legislation that will be valuable for thousands of business travelers and their companies. When I met with Senator McCaskill's office, the staff took time to understand the issues surrounding redress and how those challenges impact American businesses. Now I see that discussion had a real impact.'

The Fast Redress Act would set up a dedicated Office of Appeals and Redress within Department of Homeland Security to coordinate and streamline the process of appeal for individuals who believe they have been wrongly placed on a government watch list and consequently remanded to secondary screening or denied boarding. This office would then create and share with airlines a 'Cleared List' of individuals who have gone through the redress process. Importantly, the benefits of a successful redress petition would be shared with all government agencies with responsibility for checking individuals against government watch lists so that a person is not required to go through multiple applications with different federal agencies, as may happen today. Thus, a traveler seeking a visa or participation in a trusted traveler program would also benefit from a redress application submitted to the new office.

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