

Senate Committee on Commerce, Science & Transportation
Post Hearing Questions for the Record
Erroll Southers

From Senator DeMint:

1. Mr. Southers, in your response to my letter asking whether you will enter into a collective bargaining agreement with screeners you state, “My experiences with the bargaining units in those agencies have been productive, collaborative and challenging.” This seems to indicate that you think unionization of screeners is not inconsistent with maintaining the highest levels of aviation security. Is this accurate?

Response: *My statement applied to my current experience at the Los Angeles World Airport Police Department, where I have a manager’s understanding of the security workforce, environment and challenges, not to the TSA. As I mentioned in my letter to you, I would like an opportunity to assess operational and organizational issues and to talk with stakeholder groups before making a recommendation to the Secretary. If confirmed, it will be my duty and obligation to protect the nation’s transportation systems to ensure freedom of movement for people and commerce.*

2. Mr. Southers, in my letter to you I asked for an answer that began with a Yes or No. Unionization of TSA screeners is one of the three or four highest profile public policy issues facing the agency you wish to lead. Do you expect the committee to believe that you don’t actually have an opinion on such an important public policy issue?

Response: *Forming an opinion at this time would be premature and would not allow me the opportunity for research and discussions with impacted parties. I reiterate the commitment I gave you in our meeting and in my recent letter: as a 30-year law enforcement officer, the mission comes first with me. If confirmed, I will never compromise on ensuring the highest levels of security possible for the traveling public.*

3. Mr. Southers, in your letter you state, “While the responsibility to recommend that we modify or maintain the status quo rests with the TSA Administrator, the Secretary inherently retains the statutory authority to act upon my recommendation.” Additionally during the campaign the President stated, “If I am elected President, I will work to ensure that TSOs have collective bargaining rights and a voice at work to address issues that arise locally and nationally.” Mr. Southers, it seems to me that the political leadership at the highest levels has indicated the fix is in on this issue. In your discussions with the White House and the Secretary have you been assured that you will have free reign to implement the policy you believe best protects the public, even if that policy would prohibit collective bargaining?

Response: *The Secretary has said that she would like a TSA Administrator in place before any decision on this topic is made. If confirmed, I will carefully study the issue, review relevant information, reach out to stakeholder groups, and then make a recommendation to the Secretary. Before I can make that recommendation, I must have a thorough understanding of TSA's operations and workforce.*

4. Mr. Southers, was Kip Hawley (previous TSA Administrator) wrong to continue to prohibit collective bargaining?

Response: *If I am confirmed, you have my commitment to review relevant information, meet with stakeholder groups, work with all impacted parties, and thoroughly review this matter. I was not privy to information that Mr. Hawley had access to in his time as Administrator. I commit to you that I will talk to former TSA Administrators for their input and counsel as part of my review process.*