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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE,
AND TRANSPORTATION

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6125

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August 13, 2009

Mr. J. Randolph Babbitt
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20591

Ms. Gale D. Rossides
Acting Administrator, TSA
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
61 South 12th Street
Arlington, VA 20598

Dear Administrator Babbitt and Acting Administrator Rossides:

We are writing to request information regarding the coordination efforts by the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to vet Airman Certificates within the federal government. Recent press reports identified apparent weaknesses in the existing vetting system that allowed individuals representing potential national security threats to retain their airman licenses despite the enactment of laws that require the suspension or revocation of Airman Certificates for such individuals.

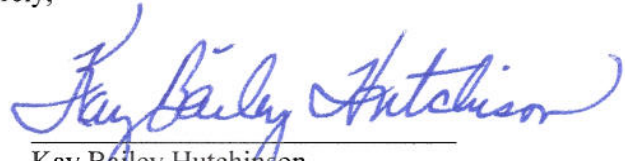
We have been informed that a recent interagency agreement between the TSA and FAA established a new process under which the TSA would assume responsibility for conducting security threat assessments of Airman Certificate holders. It is our understanding that both agencies are working with other components of the Administration on a cross agency "action plan" to reevaluate the needs of the existing vetting system and determine where improvements can and should be made. We are also interested in any efforts by the Administration to incorporate the use of biometric identifiers in either Airman Certificate or Watch List databases, and would like to be kept apprised of any consideration given to reassessing which Watch Lists the TSA vets against Airman Certificates.

Please keep us informed of the results of the cross agency action plan, which your agencies have scheduled for completion within 90 days of being initiated, and any changes that you are implementing to the Airman Certificate vetting process as they are phased in by your agencies.

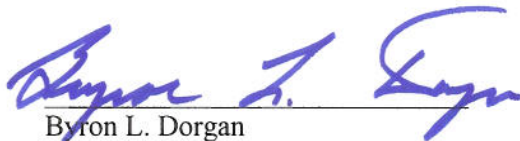
Sincerely,



John D. Rockefeller IV
Chairman



Kay Bailey Hutchison
Ranking Member



Byron L. Dorgan
Subcommittee Chairman



Jim DeMint
Ranking Member