

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 18, 2005

The Honorable Michael Chertoff
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Chertoff:

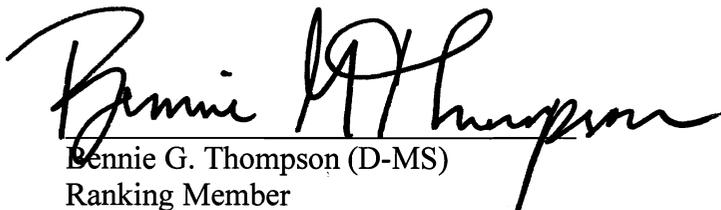
As you know, the Department of Homeland Security must issue a final rule to enhance and improve the security of air cargo by August 14, 2005, under the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 (P.L. 108-458 § 4053).

The screening of air cargo is essential to making our skies more secure from the threat of terrorism. Americans first became aware of the air cargo threat when terrorists planted a bomb in the cargo hold of TWA Flight 841 in September 1974. Over the past thirty-one years, there have been a number of changes in aviation security, not the least of which is the creation of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA). TSA is charged with addressing all terrorist threats and vulnerabilities that exist in our transportation sectors. One area that Congress has repeatedly directed TSA to address is air cargo security. Yet, the deadline for the final air cargo rule has come and gone and the Department has not acted to finalize the rule that was first announced in November 2004.

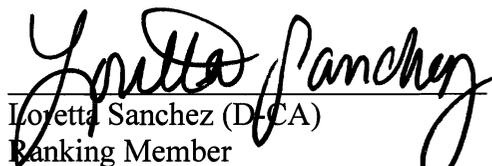
We recognize that the challenges of developing of an air cargo rule are complex and multi-faceted. That said, the law requires—and the American people expect—the Department of Homeland Security to develop a system to screen all freight, packages and mail carried aboard passenger and cargo planes. We believe that the implementation of an air cargo rule is essential to securing the air cargo supply chain and creating a layered security system for the over 23 billion pounds of cargo that is carried by air. Therefore, we respectfully request that the Department provide an explanation for why the air cargo rule could not be finalized with the 240 day period allotted under the law. We would also like the Department to provide us with a firm date for when the rule will be finalized.

Thank you, in advance, for your immediate attention on this important issue.

Sincerely,



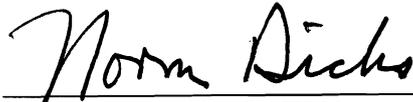
Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)
Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security



Loretta Sanchez (D-CA)
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Economic Security,
Infrastructure Protection, and Cyber-
security



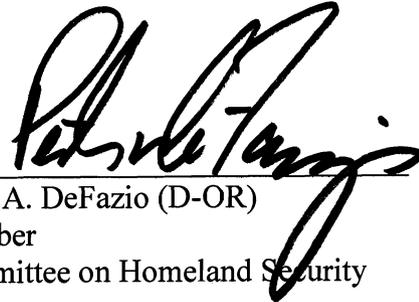
Edward J. Markey (D-MA)
Member
Committee on Homeland Security



Norman D. Dicks (D-WA)
Member
Committee on Homeland Security



Jane Harman (D-CA)
Member
Committee on Homeland Security



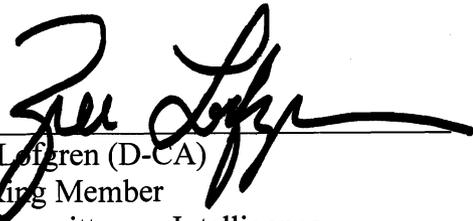
Peter A. DeFazio (D-OR)
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Committee on Homeland Security



Nita M. Lowey (D-NY)
Member
Committee on Homeland Security



Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC)
Member
Committee on Homeland Security



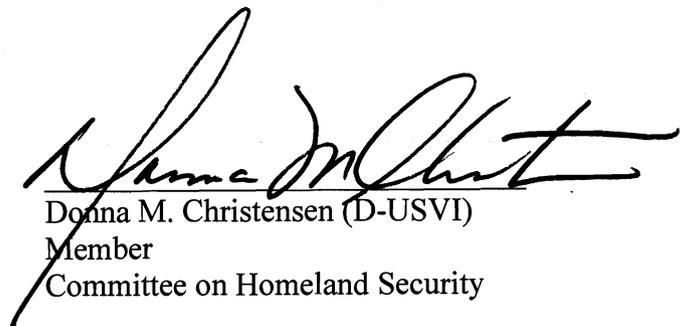
Zoe Lofgren (D-CA)
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Intelligence,
Information Sharing, and Terrorism Risk
Assessment



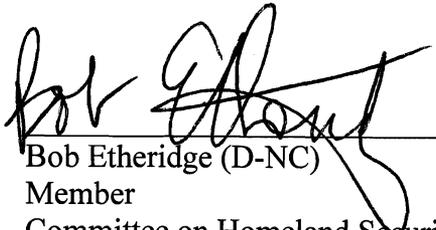
Sheila Jackson-Lee (D-TX)
Member
Committee on Homeland Security



Bill Pascrell, Jr. (D-NJ)
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Emergency
Preparedness, Science and Technology



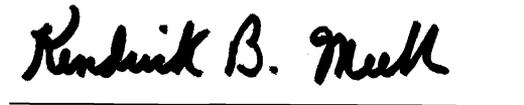
Donna M. Christensen (D-USVI)
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Committee on Homeland Security



Bob Etheridge (D-NC)
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James R. Langevin (D-RI)
Ranking Member
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