

Mr. Speaker, today I introduce legislation to protect Americans from physical and emotional abuse by federal Transportation Security Administration employees conducting screenings at the nation's airports. Year after year the TSA seems more belligerent toward Americans simply seeking to travel within their own country – a most basic of our fundamental rights -- and sadly Americans are just expected to shut up and take it. We should not have to shut up and take it!

Many Americans continue to fool themselves into accepting TSA abuses by saying "I don't mind giving up my freedoms for security." In fact, they are giving up their liberties and not receiving security in return. Time and time again we see the revolting pictures of federal screeners with their hands down the pants of children while parents watch helplessly in agony. We see elderly or disabled Americans being forced to endure all manner of indignity. At the same time, we repeatedly hear of passengers who seem to check all the boxes marked "suspicious activity" slipping through unencumbered. Just recently we read of a Nigerian immigrant breezing through TSA security checks to board a flight from New York to LA -- with a stolen, expired boarding pass and an out-of-date student ID as his sole identification. We should not be surprised to find government ineptitude and indifference at the TSA, however.

What we ultimately need is real privatization of security, but not phony privatization with the same TSA screeners in private security firm uniforms still operating under the "guidance" of the federal government. Real security will be achieved when the airlines are once again in charge of protecting their property and their passengers.

To move us in that direction, I am today introducing the American Traveler Dignity Act, which establishes that any federal employee or agency or any individual or entity that receives Federal funds 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 not above laws the rest of us must obey. As we continue to see more and more outrageous stories of TSA abuses and failures, I hope that my colleagues in the House will listen to their constituents and join with me to support this legislation.