

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 8, 2017

President Donald J. Trump
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump,

I write to express my serious concerns regarding any consideration to eliminate critical Transportation Security Administration (TSA) programs that safeguard Americans while traveling. According to recent reports, a draft proposal, drawn up by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), would eliminate the Federal Flight Deck Officer (FFDO) training program, the Visible Intermodal Prevention and Response (VIPR) teams, and cut essential grant funding for local law enforcement. In the face of international terrorism, it is critical that we make every effort to secure passenger aircraft, airports, train stations, and bus depots.

The Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) in Artesia, New Mexico serves as the leading training site for the brave men and women who are our nation's front line of defense against dangerous threats and terrorism. Over 500 dedicated FLETC staff in Artesia work hard every day to make sure that law enforcement agents from across the United States get the best quality training.

Since 2003, Artesia has been home to the Federal Flight Deck Officer program. This program was established in the wake of the September 11th attacks to prepare pilots and flight crews for similar attacks on aircraft. Under this program, hundreds of commercial pilots volunteer their time to become part of the nation's first line of defense against terrorist acts. Our dedicated FLETC staff in Artesia work hard to make sure that pilots from across the United States get the best quality training and are well-equipped to respond to threats.

Furthermore, TSA works with our intelligence and law enforcement agencies to deploy VIPR teams, based on threat levels and other security priorities, which consist of law enforcement officials, regulatory inspectors, explosives specialists, and in some cases, screening personnel. TSA's VIPR teams provide a full range of law enforcement and transportation security capabilities. Last year I led a group of senators in securing final passage of a provision to expand the number of VIPR teams from the current 31 to as many as 60, and to enhance the security presence in pre-screening airport areas and other transportation facilities, especially in non-secure "soft" target areas at airports like check-in and baggage claim areas.

I strongly urge you to reconsider any cuts to the Federal Flight Deck Officer Program, VIPR program, and local law enforcement grants. While we relentlessly target terrorists overseas, it's critical that we maintain these additional safeguards. By retaining these safety programs, we will intelligently respond to threats.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Martin Heinrich', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Martin Heinrich
United States Senator