

been adequate analysis of the performance of private airport screeners prior to allowing privatization.

In a November 16, 2004, press release announcing the commencement of its Screener Partnership Program, TSA stated, "An evaluation earlier this year concluded there was little difference in the performance or cost of the private and federal screening forces."

TSA is relying on a study that both the DHS IG and GAO found to be inconclusive. Given the high stakes involved in airport security, I am concerned that the decision to begin this program is being made without sufficient data.

In addition, I have concerns about TSA's ability to award and administer contracts with private screening companies based on a September 2004 DHS IG report that found TSA mismanaged a contract with Boeing to install Explosive Detection Systems, EDS, and overpaid Boeing by approximately \$49 million. According to the IG report, contractor performance was not evaluated for each year of the contract until approximately a full calendar year later. Most troubling is that TSA rejected some of the IG's key criticisms, which makes me question the manner in which it will manage future contracts. Moreover, I believe we must also consider whether contractual mismanagement could lead to lapses in security. Are the right standards and policies in place to ensure that private screeners will provide the same security as federalized screeners, and is TSA equipped to enforce them?

As the ranking member of the Financial Management Subcommittee and the Armed Services Readiness Subcommittee, I have long worked on the challenges of Federal acquisitions. I want to make sure that DHS, which is a composite of 22 legacy agencies, has the people and tools needed to solicit and manage the Screener Partnership Program. Just this week I contacted Secretary Ridge to express my concern about the \$49 million overrun of the Boeing EDS installation contract. That wasted money could have gone a long way towards helping Honolulu International Airport in my home State of Hawaii install inline EDS machines.

My interest is to improve the management of contracts and the collection of timely and accurate information and to stop erroneous and improper payments to contractors. For that reason I was pleased to work with my good friend, Senator FITZGERALD, in passing legislation to bring the Department of Homeland Security under the Chief Financial Officers Act, CFO. The Department runs the risk of becoming a morass of hidden contract costs and poorly managed programs without a strong CFO to ensure accountability and transparency.

I would, however, like to commend TSA for honoring a commitment made by Admiral Stone at his confirmation hearing before the Governmental Affairs Committee that Federal screeners

at airports which chose to use a private workforce give TSA screeners the right of first refusal for jobs. It is important that the substantial investment made by the Federal Government in the hiring, the training, and the deployment of Federal screeners not go to waste.

I plan to monitor very carefully how this plan develops, both in terms of the level of security provided to the traveling public and the level of transparency and accountability of the contracts.

PROPOSED CONSOLIDATION OF FLIGHT SERVICE STATIONS

• Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, today I express my concerns regarding Federal Aviation Administration proposals to consolidate and outsource the actions currently executed by our Nation's Flight Service Stations.

Flight Service Stations are staffed by highly trained specialists and play an important role in providing pilots with valuable weather briefings and enroute communications, as well as facilitating search and rescue services. Each air traffic specialist is trained to understand the rapidly changing weather and geographic patterns of their area. Their expertise has kept flights running smoothly and has literally saved lives.

In 1997, the Federal Aviation Administration completed a 16-year effort to consolidate Flight Service Stations, reducing their total number from 318 sites to 61 sites. Since July 2002, the FAA has been developing studies regarding the outsourcing and further consolidation of 58 of the remaining 61 stations, excluding the three stations in Alaska. The FAA has announced that a final decision regarding the fate of these 58 Flight Service Stations will be made before March 17, 2005, possibly as soon as January.

I have received letters, phone calls, e-mails, and visits from South Dakotans concerned about the FAA's proposed actions. After the first consolidation in 1997, Flight Service Station sites in Aberdeen, Rapid City, Watertown, and Pierre, SD, were closed. Closure of the Flight Service Station in Huron, the last in South Dakota, would leave pilots isolated from weather updates, emergency assistance, and other vital notices. Weather is the leading cause of aviation accidents and the greatest contributor to fatalities. South Dakota cannot afford the loss of this crucial site.

My concerns and the concerns of South Dakotans are echoed in our State's legislature. In February 2004, the South Dakota Legislature approved a concurrent resolution supporting the Flight Service Station in Huron, SD, and encouraging efforts to preserve its functions. Additionally, our Governor has publicly expressed his opposition to the possible outsourcing of operations conducted at the Flight Service Station.

Flight safety is paramount and must be the most important factor in any

decision that is made. However, it is the concern of many in my State that the proposed action will be detrimental to flight safety. I strongly urge the FAA to reevaluate their plans to allow for the continued effectiveness of Flight Service Stations. •

HOUSE PASSAGE OF THE INTERNET TAX NON-DISCRIMINATION ACT

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I am pleased that the House of Representatives passed today the Internet Tax Non-Discrimination, Act, S. 150, clearing this bipartisan bill for its signature into law by the President. This bipartisan legislation will continue to support electronic commerce by keeping it free from discriminatory and multiple State and local taxes and from Internet access taxes.

I am proud to be a cosponsor and strong supporter of this compromise legislation to extend for the next 3 years the moratorium on taxes on Internet access and multiple and discriminatory taxes on electronic commerce. In addition, our bipartisan bill will safeguard fees for universal service and 911 or E-911 services and does not affect the emerging technology of Voice Over Internet Protocol, VOIP. I thank Senator WYDEN, Senator ALLEN, Senator MCCAIN, Representative COX, Representative SENSENBRENNER, Representative CONYERS, and others for their leadership on this legislation.

The Internet has changed the way we do business. Today businesses can sell their goods and services all over the world in the blink of an eye. E-commerce has created new markets, new efficiencies and new products.

The growth of electronic commerce is everywhere, and it has been important to the businesses and the economy of my home State of Vermont. For example, the Vermont Teddy Bear Company, which employs more than 300 Vermonters, sells online 60 percent of its bears during its two busiest times of the year for Valentine's Day and Mother's Day. That is 60 percent of all Vermont Teddy Bears sold online during this busy time.

Hundreds of Vermont businesses are selling online, ranging from Al's Snowmobile Parts Warehouse to Ben & Jerry's Homemade Ice Cream. These Vermont cybersellers are of all sizes and customer bases, from Main Street merchants to boutique entrepreneurs to a couple of famous ex-hippies who make great ice cream.

What Vermont online sellers have in common is that Internet commerce allows them to erase the geographic barriers that historically limited our access to major markets. With the power of the Internet, Vermonters can sell their products and services anywhere and at any time.

Although electronic commerce is beginning to blossom, it is still in its infancy. Stability is the key to reaching its full potential, and carving out new