

## Protecting Aviation Operations During Government Shutdowns:

**Keep Our Economy Moving, Protect Travelers, & Ensure TSA and FAA Personnel Are Paid**

### BACKGROUND

Reliable air travel depends on the continued operation of Transportation Security Administration (TSA) screening services and Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) air traffic control. Business travelers, airlines, and travel agencies rely on these agencies for predictable schedules, efficient operations, and traveler confidence. The stakes are high: U.S. business travel spending reached \$538.5 billion, generating **\$623.8 billion**/ 2.1% of total U.S. GDP and supporting **6.7 million jobs**.<sup>1</sup>

### THE ISSUE

The recent **76-day Department of Homeland Security shutdown**, the longest funding lapse in U.S. history, was unacceptable. Travelers, frontline workers, and the broader economy bore the consequences of a budget impasse they had no role in creating. The disruption to aviation operations was immediate and severe:

- TSA officer callout rates reached **40 to 50 percent** at some major airports, with screening checkpoints closed and security lines stretching out of terminal doors.
- Travelers endured **nearly four-hour wait times** at airports across the country. Travelers were delayed, flights were canceled, and in some cases, entire events were pulled down.
- More than **1,110 TSA officers resigned** during the shutdown, creating long-term staffing damage that will affect travelers for months to come.

### THE SOLUTION: KEEP AMERICA FLYING ACT

No permanent funding mechanism currently exists to protect TSA and FAA personnel from another shutdown. Without durable safeguards, essential aviation personnel remain exposed to future funding lapses, and travelers continue to bear the consequences. Two bipartisan bills offer durable fixes:

- **The Keep America Flying Act (S. 3031 / H.R. 5851)** provides continuing appropriations to keep both TSA officers and essential FAA personnel paid during any lapse in appropriations.

### WHY IT MATTERS

- **Protects business travelers from avoidable disruption.** Predictable screening and air traffic operations are foundational to the \$538 billion U.S. business travel economy.
- **Stops aviation safety from collateral damage.** Essential personnel should not be used as leverage in unrelated budget disputes.
- **Stabilizes the TSA and FAA workforce.** Permanent pay protections curb the attrition and morale damage that compound with each funding lapse.

#### **THE ASK: Cosponsor the Keep America Flying Act and the Aviation Funding Solvency Act**

GBTA urges Members of Congress to cosponsor the Keep America Flying Act (S. 3031 / H.R. 5851) and to permanently shield TSA officers, FAA air traffic controllers, and the traveling public from the impacts of future government shutdowns.

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<sup>1</sup> GBTA 2026 U.S. Business Travel Economic Impact