



March 17, 2026

The Honorable John Thune
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-230, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
2267 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Majority Leader Thune, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Johnson, and Minority Leader Jeffries:

The American Association of Airport Executives (AAAE), Airports Council International - North America (ACI-NA), and our airport members nationwide are writing to implore you to end the funding impasse for the Department of Homeland Security. With Congress scheduled to break soon for a scheduled two-week recess, it is imperative that an agreement be reached immediately to restore funding for hard-working Americans who are currently performing critical security-related jobs without pay.

Since the beginning of the fiscal year on October 1, most DHS employees, including those at the Transportation Security Administration, have worked without funding certainty and pay for nearly half the time. This is unacceptable and must end. These important jobs — which protect the security and safety of the traveling public — are challenging under the best of circumstances. Working without pay adds to the stress of already stressful jobs.

As this funding impasse drags on, critical federal employees at airports, like frontline Transportation Security Officers (TSOs), are having to decide whether they can afford to continue federal employment or if they need to leave in favor of more stable jobs. Since missing a full paycheck on March 13, unexcused absences of TSOs have tripled to a nationwide average above 10 percent, with several airports experiencing call-out rates above 50 percent. This has caused lengthy wait times during an already busy period with peak spring break travel. Also, we are very concerned that staff shortages will continue at airports and cause delays during high profile events like the FIFA World Cup. With less than 90 days before the first FIFA games begin, TSA will not have sufficient time to backfill experienced TSOs who will continue to leave the agency during this shutdown.

TSA employees work hard. They have families and bills to pay. They are being forced in some cases to find second jobs or rely on donations to buy groceries or gas or meet basic needs. Our airport members nationwide have been providing assistance to TSA employees with food pantries, diaper banks, gas cards, and other needed items at our facilities, just like we did during previous prolonged shutdowns. Federal employees deserve better; Congress needs to end the funding impasse now.

In addition to immediately ending the shutdown, we urge Congress to enact legislation that would provide pay for TSA and other critical federal aviation workers who keep our nation safe and secure during any future

shutdown so that they never miss a paycheck again. A functioning aviation system is essential to the well-being of our country, and the dedicated federal workers who ensure its operation cannot continue to be pawns in political gamesmanship.

We urge Congress to work with the administration to resolve this funding dispute now, well ahead of the next congressional recess scheduled to begin in late March.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kevin M. Burke". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kevin" written in a smaller, more compact script than the last name "Burke".

Kevin M. Burke
President and CEO
Airports Council International – North America

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Todd Hauptli". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Todd" written in a smaller, more compact script than the last name "Hauptli".

Todd Hauptli
President and CEO
American Association of Airport Executives