

TSA Employees Find A Warm Welcome

Last month, several Transportation Security Officers (TSOs) got a unique opportunity to see how Washington, D.C., works as they arrived on Capitol Hill to lobby for enhanced workplace protections at the Transportation Security Administration (TSA).

The TSOs spent three days being ushered



TSOs from four chapters spread out across Capitol Hill after speaking with President Kelley at the opening session. From left to right are: Ronda Ball-Wheat and Ramon Halsey (both Chapter 310, TSA Atlanta), Yasir Sheikh (Chapter 311, TSA LaGuardia), President Kelley, Clarence Wells and Jamila McFarlane (both Chapter 310) and Juan Eslava (Chapter 315, TSA Philadelphia).

into Capitol Hill meeting rooms with key congressional staffers on the House and Senate Homeland Security committees where they discussed poor workplace conditions, including unfair shift scheduling, low pay and the urgent need for full collective bargaining rights

“We came to fight to make TSA a better place

to work, not just for ourselves, but for our co-workers,” said Chapter 310 (TSA Atlanta) President Clarence Wells. “We want to give a face to the struggle that TSOs across the country are going through.”

Afterward, TSOs were pleased that lawmakers and their staff members asked thoughtful questions and seemed genuinely interested in what the TSOs had to say. Several lawmakers pledged their support of efforts to improve the TSA workplace and make the agency more effective for our country.

“The legislators and their staffs really knew a lot of details about TSA and its employees,” said Chapter 310 member Jamila McFarlane. “Sometimes, the hardest part was trying to find a new angle to discuss that

they did not already know about.”

The TSOs, several of whom were attending their first conference, said the opportunity to make their voice heard on issues of national importance was invaluable. “We want these lawmakers to understand that collective bargaining rights will allow us to fight for an environment

where TSOs are respected and their opinions valued,” said Chapter 313 (TSA Miami) Interim President Jorge Garcia.

Chapter 311 (TSA LaGuardia) Interim President Yasir Sheikh was grateful that legislators seemed determined to change TSA’s course and help make it an agency that values and respects its workforce.

“We came here to take advantage of this moment to help shape the future of TSA and its officers,” Sheikh said. “Congress understands this and is working to get involved like never before.”

NTEU President Colleen M. Kelley has repeatedly urged Congress to provide TSOs with the same statutory rights and protections as are afforded to other federal employees—a message that she repeated in testimony before a hearing of the House Homeland Security Subcommittee on Management, Investigations and Oversight. (See story next page.)

NTEU is pursuing a two-pronged effort to provide TSOs with collective bargaining rights, as well as inclusion in the General Schedule, through congressional legislation and executive directives from the White House.

“All we are asking for is simple fairness in how we are paid and in how we are treated in the workplace,” said Chapter 310 Vice President Ronda Ball-Wheat. “It is nice to know that so many members of Congress are standing with us.” ■