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
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Government Grants Airport Screeners Union Rights

February 5th, 2011 | Author: [jimschaffner](#)

The WallStreet Journal

FEBRUARY 4, 2011

—The government will grant collective bargaining rights to the nation's 40,000 airport screeners, the head of the largest federal workers union said Friday.



John Gage, president of the American Federation of Government Employees, told the Associated Press he was informed of the decision at a meeting with John Pistole, head of the Transportation Security Administration.

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TSA workers have tried for nearly a decade to win the same union protections as other federal employees, but Republican

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opponents have balked over worries that union demands could jeopardize national security or slow response times in a crisis. Union officials call those arguments an insult to the hundreds of thousands of public safety officers that already have collective bargaining rights, including Border Patrol agents, firefighters and the Capitol police.

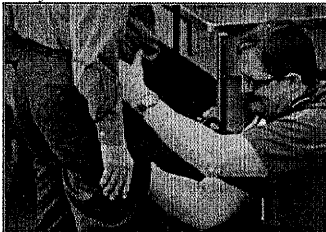
“Today marks the recognition of a fundamental human right for 40,000 patriotic federal employees who have been disenfranchised since the inception of the agency,” Mr. Gage said.

Mr. Pistole had spent months studying the unionization issue since he was confirmed to the post in June. The move comes just days after Mr. Pistole said the agency would not hire private contractors to screen airline passengers, despite calls to do so from some Republican lawmakers and frustrated passengers.



When the agency was created in 2001, it was excluded from regulations that give other federal workers the right to union protections. The law gave the TSA administrator the authority to decide whether collective bargaining should be allowed, and under the administration of President George W. Bush it was always prohibited.

President Barack Obama had pledged to get the screeners collective bargaining rights during his campaign. But the effort was delayed after Obama’s first two choices to run the agency dropped out during their confirmation



processes.

Earlier this week, **Sen. Roger Wicker (R., Miss.)** offered an amendment to the FAA authorization bill that would bar the screeners from gaining union rights.

“Burdensome and costly union demands could limit the ability of those responsible for security at some of the most high-risk targets to do their job,” Mr. Wicker said. **“The FBI, the CIA and the Secret Service do not have collective bargaining rights for good reason.”**

The Federal Labor Relations Authority has already set union elections at the TSA to begin in early March. TSA employees will choose between AFGE and the National Treasury Employees Union for representation.

AFGE already has more than 12,000 dues-paying members among the screeners’ ranks, but the union has not been allowed to bargain on behalf of its members.

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