



The Daily Dish

Budgetary Bait and Switch

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(Rage and hypertension alert: The images are real, the facts are the facts, the desire to burn it all down is...a daily occurrence.)

So, this is what greeted fliers when they arrived at America's airports yesterday:



The chaos at security checkpoints is being attributed to spring break travel and understaffing of Transportation Security Agency (TSA) facilities due to lack of full appropriations for the Department of Homeland Security.

But how can that be? After all, the 2001 [Aviation and Transportation Security Act](#) that

created the TSA also contained fees to pay for TSA personnel:

§ 44940. Security service fee

(a) GENERAL AUTHORITY.

(1) PASSENGER FEES.—The Under Secretary of Transportation for Security shall impose a uniform fee, on passengers of air carriers and foreign air carriers in air transportation and intrastate air transportation originating at airports in the United States, to pay for the following costs of providing civil aviation security services:

(A) Salary, benefits, overtime, retirement and other costs of screening personnel, their supervisors and managers, and Federal law enforcement personnel deployed at airport security screening locations under section 44901.

(B) The costs of training personnel described in subparagraph (A), and the acquisition, operation, and maintenance of equipment used by such personnel.

The original fee was \$2.50 per trip (\$5.00 for a round trip) and was added to the ticket price. Because of these fees, TSA and the safety of passengers could not be held hostage by a lack of annual appropriations. Nor could a lack of annual appropriations stymie passengers' ability to plan their travel day and not have a COMPLETELY \$%^& MISERABLE EXPERIENCE.

What happened? Congress happened.

The 2013 [Bipartisan Budget Act](#) included this bit of larceny:

(b) Restructuring of Passenger Fee—Section 44940(c) of such title is amended to read as follows:

(c) Limitation on Fee—Fees imposed under subsection (a)(1) shall be \$5.60 per one-way trip in air transportation or intrastate air transportation that originates at an airport in the United States.

(c) Deposit of Receipts in General Fund—Section 44940(i) of such title is amended to read as follows:

(i) Deposit of Receipts in General Fund.

(1) <<NOTE: Effective date.>> In general—Beginning in fiscal year 2014, out of fees received in a fiscal year under subsection (a)(1), after amounts are made available in the fiscal year under section 44923(h), the next funds derived from such fees in the fiscal year, in the amount specified for the fiscal year in paragraph (4), shall be credited as offsetting receipts and deposited in the general fund of the Treasury.