



NEWS FROM

Councilman Dennis P. Zine

Third Council District, City Hall, Room 450, Los Angeles, CA 90012

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ZINE LEGISLATION CALLS FOR TOUGHER PENALTIES FOR INDIVIDUALS WHO EVADE AIRPORT SECURITY

Acting on a desire to improve security at all Los Angeles World Airport (LAWA) facilities, today Councilmember Dennis P. Zine introduced legislation asking the City Attorney's office, in conjunction with the Los Angeles Police Department, the Los Angeles Airport Police, and the District Attorney, to investigate the severity of punishments for individuals who willfully bypass security at any LAWA facility.

While State and Federal laws do speak to this type of misconduct, the City of Los Angeles currently lacks a municipal code section dealing specifically with this type of reoccurring problem. Since the federal government often finds the prosecution of these individuals as cost prohibitive, Councilman Zine believes it is time for the city to take action

"I was shocked to discover that Los Angeles, which maintains four airports, does not have a law which penalizes individuals who carelessly bypass security," said Zine. "It is inconceivable that almost three years after September 11th 2001, citizens are still claiming to be unaware of tightened security measures."

This motion follows two separate incidents at Los Angeles International Airport (LAX), one in July and the most recent during the first week of September, where individuals in both cases attempted to avoid airport security personnel to gain access to LAX.

On September 4, 2004, an individual successfully bypassed a security checkpoint at LAX after intentionally going the wrong way on a flight of stairs. According to the Los Angeles Times, this scare caused the evacuation of over 10,000 passengers and the delay of at least 250 flights. This is in addition to the response of public safety personnel, which included approximately 200 airport police, Los Angeles police, the fire department, and federal transportation security employees.

While the overwhelming response to Saturday's incident was magnified by a second and unrelated security scare, this is the second such incident in recent months. The other breach of airport security occurred on July 18th of this year when a man attempted to gain access to aircraft by scaling a security fence.

Though these acts were later dismissed as non-terrorist threats, the ramifications are devastating. In addition to the thousands of travelers who are inconvenienced, there are staggering additional costs for the airport, affected airlines, related businesses, law enforcement and most importantly, taxpayers.

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Focusing on the financial burden generated by these evacuations, Councilman Zine's motion will

ask the City Attorney to investigate the feasibility of assessing the costs to individuals who are successfully prosecuted.

“ Every time the terminals are evacuated hundreds of public safety personnel respond, and the cost to evacuate the terminal and take the necessary precautions is astronomical, ” said Zine. “ These are officers that could otherwise be on the streets, and in the airport, attending to real criminal threats.”

The recent incidents at LAX involved individuals who were either mentally unstable, or simply went through security to retrieve a lost item. Clearly these are actions undeserving of the resources they drain.

LAWA currently manages four airport facilities:

Los Angeles International Airport

Ontario International Airport

Van Nuys Airport

Palmdale Airport

This motion will be referred to the Public Safety Committee for further review.

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