

United States Senate

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October 15, 2004

The Honorable Tom Ridge
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Ridge:

I was extremely dismayed with the Department of Homeland Security Inspector General's report concerning the lavish spending – \$461,745 – that was undertaken by the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) for an awards ceremony.

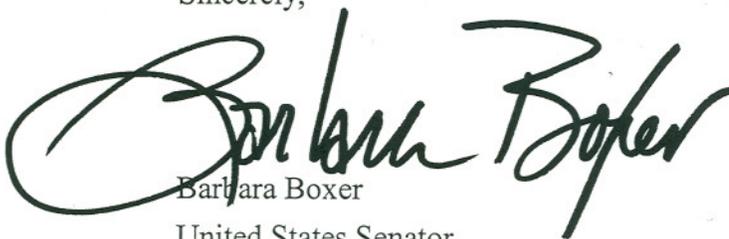
Our nation's homeland security is grossly underfunded. Every available dollar should be used wisely. However, TSA does not seem to agree. For example, according to the Inspector General's report, \$85,552 was spent for a private party planning company. The duties included assisting in designing an "internal communications plan" to inform all TSA staff about the awards and providing copywriting, design, and production assistance for the awards program booklet.

It would have been a far better use of the funds to increase security at our ports, borders, airports, and rail and transit lines. It would have been a far better use of the funds to finally develop a strategic plan to protect our vital transportation sector. According to the 9-11 Commission Report, "...the TSA has developed neither an integrated strategic plan for the transportation sector nor specific plans for the various modes – air, sea, and ground."

I agree that morale is important for the employees of your Department. However, I hope that in the future, homeland security funding will not be wasted on lavish events.

I look forward to your prompt reply.

Sincerely,



Barbara Boxer
United States Senator