



Tallman wants to stop airport body searches

GREG GROSS *The York Dispatch*

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State Rep. Will Tallman, R-Reading Township is hoping to put a stop to what he calls "unconstitutional invasions of privacy" during airport security searches.

Tallman introduced a bill in the state House that would make it a crime for an airport security guard to touch a person's genitals and breasts during security checks.

Those performing the checks could be charged with indecent assault, a misdemeanor offense, if they touch a person's private areas, under Tallman's proposal.

Federal, state, or municipal employees would not be immune from prosecution, Tallman said.

Tallman was one of five representatives who introduced the bill. Texas and New Hampshire legislators have introduced similar bills in their respective state houses.

Tallman said the Transportation Security Administration searches go above and beyond what is necessary when boarding a flight and state legislators need to take a stand on what he calls infringements to the Pennsylvania and U.S. Constitution.

"Why are we subjecting our citizens to this invasion of privacy?" Tallman said.

Anne Davis, a TSA spokeswoman, said she could not comment on pending legislation.

Hassles: If the bill is enacted, enforcement would fall on the county where each airport is located, Tallman said.

For example, he said if a perceived infraction occurred at Harrisburg International Airport, the Dauphin County district attorney's office would investigate allegations and file any necessary charges.

In January, Tallman flew out of Harrisburg International Airport and opted for a pat down to see what it was like.

He said he was alarmed by the procedure.

"I found it to be an invasion of my privacy," Tallman said.

At security check points prior to boarding, travelers have the option of going through a full-body scan or being patted down. Health and privacy concerns about the full-body scan have been raised.

Tallman also presented a resolution that calls on Congress to address concerns raised by screening methods used by the TSA. Seven other

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representatives co-sponsored the resolution.

Too far: On Wednesday, the House government committee held a hearing on TSA searches where representatives from political advocacy groups, such as the ACLU and the Cato Institute testified against the searches, Tallman said.

State Rep. Seth Grove, R-Dover Township, also sat in on the hearing and said he believes the TSA is going too far when it comes to searches.

A representative from one of the groups testified that women, particularly attractive women, are selected for pat downs more often than men, Grove said.

Female TSA agents conduct pat downs on women, he added.

He said he'd like Congress to address the concerns and is in favor of Tallman's bill and resolution.

Grove said he has concerns over personal privacy during pat downs and with the full-body scanners. Also, he added, he has issues with images captured by the scanners being kept, especially images of those who, by all accounts, have done nothing wrong.

"I think airport security has been reactive rather than proactive," Grove said.

-- Reach Greg Gross at 505-5434 or ggross@yorkdispatch.com.

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