



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on January 23, 2012

Sen. Rand Paul Blocked from Flight for Refusing TSA Groping

U.S. Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.) missed a flight to Washington, D.C., this morning after being detained by screeners with the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) for refusing a full-body pat-down, his staff said. The incident happened at the Nashville, Tennessee, airport when a so-called "naked-body scanner" found some sort of anomaly around the conservative Senator's knee.



Sen. Paul offered to go through the scanner again to resolve any concerns TSA screeners may have had. He also exposed the relevant portion of his leg to prove that there was nothing there. But the TSA insisted on the full-body pat down.

Sen. Paul refused to submit to what he has in the past referred to as an "invasive" procedure. And the TSA refused to back down.

According to Paul, he was briefly detained by TSA screeners in a small cubicle. He was also prohibited from catching his flight to Washington, where he was supposed to speak at the March for Life rally and vote in the Senate later in the afternoon.

The freshman Senator was eventually escorted from the area by local police, a TSA official [told](#) CBS News. He was finally allowed to catch a later flight after a subsequent TSA screening was conducted "without incident," according to the agency.

Sen. Paul spoke out about the incident at the scene, explaining that he did not have any medical issues that would have set off the TSA scanner. "There is no problem. It was just a problem with their machine. But this is getting more frequent, and because everybody has to have a pat-down, it's a problem," Sen. Paul [told reporters](#) at the airport, noting that he did not want special treatment because he is a Senator. "I think we need to treat everybody with dignity."

As usual, the TSA offered few details about what is quickly growing into another scandal for the embattled screening bureaucracy. The agency also claimed Sen. Paul was not "detained" but was merely prevented from boarding his flight.

"When an irregularity is found during the TSA screening process, it must be resolved prior to allowing a passenger to proceed to the secure area of the airport," various TSA spokesmen were quoted as saying in statements e-mailed to the press. "Passengers who refuse to complete the screening process cannot be granted access to the secure area in order to ensure the safety of others traveling."

Sen. Paul and his father, GOP presidential contender Rep. Ron Paul (R-Texas), have both been vocal in their opposition to the TSA and its policies. In June of 2011, Sen. Paul [grilled TSA boss John Pistole](#) for



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conducting an inappropriate pat-down of a six-year-old Kentucky girl and for a broader pattern of abuses.

"I feel less safe because you're doing these invasive exams on a six-year-old," Sen. Paul [told](#) Pistole during the hearing. "It makes me think you're clueless, you know, that you think she's going to attack our country and that you're not doing your research on the people who would attack our country."

Sen. Paul also told Pistole that he thought the TSA — part of the sprawling Homeland Security bureaucracy erected after September 11 — should abolish its random pat-downs. "It really just shows that no one is thinking," he noted, saying that the American people were increasingly fed up with the procedures. "We need to be doing better police work and doing less of the universal giving up of our freedom to live our life the way we would like to live our life."

News about the incident in Nashville was quickly reported by Sen. Paul's staff and his father, Rep. Ron Paul. "My son @SenRandPaul being detained by TSA for refusing full body pat-down after anomaly in body scanner in Nashville. More details coming," read a [statement issued](#) on Ron Paul's Twitter account. A similar statement was posted on Ron Paul's Facebook profile, and Sen. Paul's staff also [confirmed](#) the incident via social media and press statements.

Following Sen. Paul's troubles with the TSA, his father's presidential campaign issued a statement blasting abuses perpetrated by the screening agency. "The police state in this country is growing out of control. One of the ultimate embodiments of this is the TSA that gropes and grabs our children, our seniors, and our loved ones and neighbors with disabilities," Ron Paul said. "The TSA does all of this while doing nothing to keep us safe."

Rep. Paul, whose presidential campaign has attracted a broad and enthusiastic base of supporters that helped him become a serious contender despite [blatant media bias](#), also noted that his "Plan to Restore America" would — in addition to shaving \$1 trillion in spending the first year — abolish the TSA.

"We must restore the freedom and respect for liberty that once made America the greatest nation in human history," Rep. Paul concluded in the statement posted on his campaign website. "I am deeply committed to doing that as President of the United States."

The Obama administration, meanwhile, sided with the TSA in its bizarre treatment of a sitting U.S. Senator. "I think it is absolutely essential that we take necessary actions to ensure that air travel is safe," White House spokesman Jay Carney was [quoted as saying](#) by *The Hill*.

A damning [congressional report](#) released late last year revealed that despite spending around \$60 billion on the TSA, screening is based on "theatrics" and the agency has failed to catch a single terrorist. Meanwhile, according to the investigation, passengers and crew are still the most effective line of defense. And air travel is no safer than it was before September 11.

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