

Murphy Rips TSA for Buying Chinese-Made Bracelets Commemorating 10th Anniversary of 9/11

Congressman

Chris Murphy sent a letter to Transportation Security Administration Administrator John Pistole, criticizing the agency's recent purchase of bracelets commemorating the 10th anniversary of the September 11th attacks that were made in China, and calling on the agency to clarify the legal authority by which the contract was awarded.

On

January 10th, Bloomberg News reported that TSA had purchased the Chinese-made bracelets, which were "among as much as \$84 billion in U.S. contracts awarded for foreign goods and services in the fiscal year that ended Sept. 30, mostly through exemptions from legislation designed to restrict such deals."

As

founder and co-chairman of the congressional Buy American Caucus, Murphy is leading the drive to strengthen federal procurement laws designed to keep U.S. tax dollars from being sent overseas and to support American jobs and manufacturers.

"While

your goal of commemorating the tragic events of that day is one we all share as Americans, this purchase could have, and should have, been done in a way that supports American jobs," Murphy wrote. "By awarding this contract to a company who imported the items from China - a country with questionable labor practices, a dismal record of human rights violations and a manipulated currency - your agency denied American workers the opportunity to manufacture these commemorative bracelets with pride here in the United States."

Full

text of Rep. Murphy's letter:

January
31, 2012

Administrator
John Pistole

Transportation
Security Administration

601 South 12th Street
Arlington, VA 20598

Dear
Administrator Pistole,

I
was frustrated to learn that your agency recently purchased 70,000 bracelets commemorating the 10 year anniversary of the September 11th 2001 attacks that were made in China. These bracelets cost U.S. taxpayers \$17,500, and was another poor decision in a long line of contracting awards throughout the federal government that have cost American jobs and sent American tax dollars to manufacturers overseas. While your goal of commemorating the tragic events of that day is one we all share as Americans, this purchase could have, and should have, been done in a way that supports American jobs.

Your
agency contends that the four American firms that domestically manufacture the bracelets you required could not deliver the bracelets by your required delivery date. The 10 year anniversary of September 11th, 2001 was not something that should have taken TSA by surprise, and you should have solicited bids in a more timely fashion so that the American firms could have met your needs. If given the opportunity to compete on a level-playing field, I have no doubt that any of the four companies that produce these bracelets here in the United States could have met TSA's requirements. By awarding this contract to a company who imported the items from China - a country with questionable labor practices, a dismal record of human rights violations and a manipulated currency - your agency denied American workers the opportunity to manufacture these commemorative bracelets with pride here in the United States.

As
chairman of the congressional Buy American Caucus, I am also concerned about TSA's interpretation of the law governing this type of procurement. The Buy American Act requires that your agency purchase manufactured goods that are made in America except in certain extenuating circumstances, in which case a waiver to the Act may be granted. It does not appear that any of those conditions were met in this case. Please clarify the statutory authority by which you made this purchase, and whether a waiver was issued.

Furthermore,

I ask that you work to correct this contracting decision and ones like it in the future; American manufacturers stand ready to help TSA achieve its goals. I thank you for your hard work in protecting our air transportation system and hope we can work together to support American jobs and make our country even stronger.

Sincerely,

Christopher
S. Murphy

Member
of Congress

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