

March 22, 2016

The Honorable John Hoeven
Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
SD-125 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
c/o Kathy Kraninger

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
SD-127 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
c/o Stephanie Gupta

The Honorable John Carter
Chairman
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
B-307 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
c/o Kris Mallard

The Honorable Lucille Roybal-Allard
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
B-307 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
c/o Darek Newby

RE: FY 2017 CBP Appropriations

Dear Chairmen Hoven and Carter and Ranking Members Shaheen and Roybal-Allard:

As stakeholders engaged in freight and passenger movement and security operations through our nation's seaports, we strongly urge you to increase U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) FY 2017 funding and staffing resources directed to maritime activities. Specifically, we urge you to fund the 2017 new CBP staff requested in the Administration's FY 17 budget, and include language directing new staff to be stationed in seaports of entry.

In order for America's international gateways to function more efficiently, effectively and safely, CBP must be adequately funded and staffed. In FY 2015, when CBP was funded to hire 2000 staff, fewer than 10 agents were assigned to seaports. This inequity of CBP resources cannot continue. Our nation's ports are in partnership with CBP in securing our supply chain and providing vital support in moving freight safely through our ports and out on to the national freight network.

Each year, roughly \$1.4 billion tons of foreign trade cargo, including more than 11 million maritime containers, arrive at our seaports. Additionally, over 11 million international passengers begin their cruises via U.S. seaports. CBP is on the front line when cargo and passengers enter our country. CBP officers meet the ships at all ports of entry to check the manifests, screen incoming cargo, operate non-intrusive inspection (NII) equipment including radiation portal monitors, provide specialists to examine imported fruits, vegetables and flowers for potentially harmful diseases, and other missions at our busy gateways. CBP is also responsible for screening all foreign visitors and returning American citizens and passenger ships that enter U.S. seaports.

It is not unusual for customs operations to be short of inspectors. Many ports and terminals know that staffing levels are inadequate to meet the demand. However, it is readily apparent that ports and business stakeholders are economic drivers, collecting customs duties, which amount to billions of dollars in Federal revenue brought in every year at seaports.

We know the Appropriations Committee understands the important mission of CBP at the nation's ports and so we urge that Congress increase funding for this vital agency. Last year, Congress supported the FY 2016 budget request for funds to recapitalize NII equipment and encouraged CBP to accelerate procurements of NII equipment. We urge the Committee to continue to oversee CBP's investment and management plan for inspection and detection technology with the objective of ensuring that CBP officers are adequately equipped at US seaports to handle the increasing volume of cargo.

Oddly, money is an issue even though revenues from inspection activity continue to grow. In the past year alone, we have seen the indexing of customs fees by Congress and the diversion of the revenue from CBP to fund the highway trust fund in the FAST Act. Over a half-billion dollar user fee was imposed by the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) with no guarantee that adequate inspection staffing will be available to administer these services when they are needed. Calls for deployment of more CBP resources to land borders are frequently heard. We urge the Committee to also hear the call for more CBP resources in U.S. ports.

Sincerely,

American Association of Port Authorities
American Trucking Associations' Intermodal Motor Carriers Conference
Association of Ship Brokers & Agents (USA) Inc.
Canadian/American Border Trade Alliance
CMS Transportation Inc.
Columbia River Steamship Operators' Association, Inc.
Connecticut Maritime Association
Cruise Lines International Association
Garden State Freezers Transportation LLC
J. Ward Guilday
Jacksonville Marine Transportation Exchange
Manfredi Cold Storage
Maritime Association of South Carolina
Maritime Association of the Port of New York/New Jersey
Maritime Exchange for the Delaware River and Bay
Mullica Hill Cold Storage LLC
National Association of Maritime Organizations
National Association of Waterfront Employers
National Pest Management Association
New York Shipping Association, Inc.
Pilots' Association for the Bay and River Delaware

Ports of the Delaware River Marine Trade Association
Royal Pest Solutions
Security Industry Association (SIA)
The Evans Network of Companies
The National Industrial Transportation League
United States Great Lakes Shipping Association
United States Maritime Alliance, Ltd.
Virginia Maritime Association
West Gulf Maritime Association