

March 1, 2013

The Honorable Mike McCaul  
Chairman  
U.S. House Committee on Homeland Security  
H2-176 Ford House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman McCaul:

Congratulations on being selected Chairman of the U.S. House Committee on Homeland Security in the 113th Congress. Your longstanding commitment to ensuring the nation's security will serve the committee well.

As you know, this is a crucial time for port security. Issues like deficit reduction and economic recovery pose both challenges and opportunities for the future of our nation's seaports, particularly when it comes to ensuring adequate funding for Department of Homeland Security personnel and continued funding for necessary security systems.

The American Association of Port Authorities (AAPA) was founded in 1912 and represents leading ports around the United States. AAPA firmly believes that protecting our nation's seaports remains of vital importance. Our government must continue its efforts to secure seaports, which serve as international gateways into our country.

To that end, we write to highlight AAPA's key security policy issues for the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress.

**Port Security Grants** – Since 9/11 this FEMA program has been a key component in helping port authorities harden security and protect these vital transportation hubs. There are several challenges facing this successful program. Specifically we are concerned about the grants period of performance (including extensions), and the effect of bundling all non-disaster grants.

Port security grants are often complex regional projects that take more than two years to carry out. Even grants that have three year-grant terms often need the full extension of five years. DHS's current policy of significantly limiting the performance times of grants has resulted in confusion and uncertainty as ports try to carry out their area port security plans. While we understand the interest in spurring faster utilization of grant funding, the solution of severely limited extensions is not a good one. We favor continuing the process of grant period extensions and look to increased and better coordination on projects between grantee and DHS to resolve this problem.

The second concern relates to the bundling of grants, which began last year and which the President has proposed going even further. Last year Congress cut funding significantly, and bundled all preparedness grants and gave the Secretary the final authority to fund the program. What resulted was the lowest funding level for the port security grant program since 9/11. The President proposed to take bundling one step further by sending the grants out to the states. The grant award decision should remain at the federal level for the Port Security grant program as ports are international borders. Direct grants should be made directly to the entities that apply for them. These programs are extremely important and AAPA strongly

opposes proposals to merge all critical infrastructure grant programs, such as those for port security, transit, and emergency management, into one that would be managed by the states. We also oppose the 25 percent cost-share requirement for public agencies that receive port security grants; such a requirement that does not exist for security grants for other critical infrastructure.

**Radiation Portal Monitors** – Currently there is tremendous uncertainty as to the long-term viability of the radiation scanning program that currently exists. The scanning equipment is reaching its normal performance life, and as a report released earlier this month by the Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General noted there is no funding or funding plan for operation or replacement. Financial support for the monitors, their operation and maintenance, has been substantially reduced, and there is no plan to replace them once they reach the end of their lives within the next few years. Ports should not have the responsibility or the burden of funding a homeland security program that was put in place by the federal government in order to secure United States international borders. A similar problem is brewing for the VACIS machine operations and replacement.

**TWIC** – Coast Guard rules governing Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC) readers are now being reviewed by the Office of Management and Budget. The official timetable for these rules suggests that they will be released during the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress. Ports and their contractors have spent tremendous amounts of money preparing for these rules so that they can be in compliance with an important DHS program; they must be given concrete information on when the rules will be released. In addition to rules for TWIC readers, there must be adequate resources provided by the federal government to fund and facilitate the renewal process for TWIC cards, many of which are expiring in 2014. For mobile enrollment centers, which were key to efficient operations of the first round of cards, ports are being asked to fund parts of the TWIC renewal process that they weren't before.

AAPA is committed to working with you on the important task of protecting America's seaports, our international borders, and homeland security. Please do not hesitate to contact us should the need arise and again, congratulations on your selection as Chairman.

Sincerely,



President and CEO  
KJN/kp:ism