

Comments by Charles Kieffer on behalf of
Senator Robert C. Byrd

April 1, 2008

American Association of Port Authorities
Port Person of the Year Remarks

I am pleased to be here this afternoon to receive the prestigious Port Person of the Year award on behalf of Senator Robert C. Byrd. He very much wanted to be here, but he takes his voting duties very seriously. Senator Byrd has cast a record 18,256 roll call votes on the Senate floor, and he will be casting his 18,257 vote within the hour.

Since the terrible events of 9/11, Senator Byrd pressed the White House to support the necessary resources to secure the homeland. He has worked diligently to make the Department of Homeland Security nimble and proactive. He also worked tirelessly to make sure that the Department's partners, including State, regional, and local

governments, and our ports are getting the support they need to protect America.

On Senator Byrd's behalf, I have been to ports in Boston, New York City, and New Jersey. I have been to Baltimore, Newport News, Charleston, South Carolina, Savannah, Miami, Pascagoula, Mobile, Biloxi, Gulfport, New Orleans, Houston, Galveston, Detroit, Long Beach, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Juneau, Sitka, Honolulu, and Seattle. Being no fool, I have also visited inland waterways, such as Charleston, West Virginia, and Huntington, West Virginia. There is no substitute for getting out into the real world and meeting with the people at the ports who are getting the work done. The lesson learned from those trips is that you don't secure the nation by imposing an unfunded mandate on our ports. You secure the nation by providing resources, providing intelligence, and letting the ports do their work.

Over the years, it has been a challenge to garner the needed resources to make ports across the nation safer. The White House talks a good game when it comes to homeland security, but with this White House, you have to watch what they do, not what they say. From 2003-2006, Senator Byrd offered nine separate amendments to improve port security. Regrettably, in the end as a result of Administration objections, each of those efforts was rejected.

In October 2006, the President signed the SAFE Port Act; however, he requested no new funding to implement that Act.

Well, the 2006 election brought a change in Congress. Senator Byrd wasted no time getting down to the business of improving security at our ports, without slowing critical economic activity at the ports.

Under Senator Byrd's leadership as Chairman of the Appropriations Committee, Congress approved \$110 million in the 2007 supplemental appropriations bill for port security grants. That brought us to a fiscal year 2007 total of \$320 million for port security grants. In 2007, Congress also added \$15 million above the President's request for the Coast Guard to hire additional port security inspectors, double the amount of foreign port assessments, ramp up inspections of domestic port facilities, and carry out additional port vulnerability and threat assessments. And Congress provided \$182 million to hire 450 additional Customs and Border Protection officers and to procure critical non-intrusive inspection equipment with a focus on the busiest ports of entry, especially seaports.

In fiscal year 2008, after four years of trying, Congress, at Chairman Byrd's initiative, finally approved the fully

authorized level of \$400 million for port security grants. Congress also included \$59 million above the request for Coast Guard port and cargo security enhancements, including funding to hire 511 additional personnel.

This is important work. Senator Byrd is committed to continuing this effort. In fact, later this month, the Appropriations Committee will mark up a supplemental appropriations bill that will contain significant resources for investing in America's infrastructure.

Again, on behalf of Senator Byrd, I thank you for the distinct honor of naming him Port Person of the Year.

