

Good morning ladies and gentlemen. Mr. Chairman, distinguished leaders, port colleagues and my own Board of Commissioners of the Canaveral Port Authority. It is my privilege to welcome you, on behalf of the United States Delegation, to the 99th Annual Meeting of the American Association of Port Authorities in beautiful Halifax.

I remember when I was a young lawyer in Washington, DC, I called my parents with a great deal of excitement, told them that I was going to move to Norfolk, and work for the Virginia Port Authority. My mother said “Wow, that’s great. We’re so proud.” and, after a bit of chit chat, hung up. Two minutes later, the phone rang and a familiar voice said, “We’re still proud, but what’s a Port Authority?”

So here we are today, a room full of port executives facing a world in which shoppers at Walmart don’t have a clue how the goods get to the shelves, except by a Walmart truck.

Facing a world in which I asked some friends going on a cruise a few years ago which port they were sailing from and their response was “Carnival”. When I said “Carnival is a cruise line, not a port”, their response was, “Gosh, I guess we’ll have to check on that”.

And we function in a world that is not exactly government, as more and more we are forced to depend on our own revenues for survival, but not exactly commercial, either, as our ability to create waves of economic impact often becomes the key element of our business deals rather than profit.

So why do we do this? Because what we do can positively impact the lives of thousands of people.

In today's times of economic struggle, ports are important. I can view Space Shuttle launches from my office. And in less than a year, those launches will end. Forever. And thousands of people will need jobs.

And while our region is losing space jobs, Port Canaveral will create hundreds of new jobs by 2012 just through business commitments already in hand. And that's why we do this. Because it means something.

But if that is not enough reason for us to be in the Port industry, it is because we also get to come to these great conventions once a year in wonderful places like Halifax.

So enjoy this beautiful area, but mark your calendars for 2013, when Port Canaveral and Orlando and Cocoa Beach will welcome you to another great convention, in a wonderful place, for a magical time. We promise. Thank you.