Seaports and the U.S. Economy

Modern, navigable seaports are vital to international trade and economic prosperity.

For centuries, seaports have served as vital economic lifeline by bringing goods and services to people in the United States and around the world. Today, seaports remain a critical component of our nation’s economy as they deliver goods to consumers, export U.S.-made products overseas, create millions of jobs and generate billions of dollars in federal, state and local tax revenue.

Delivering Economic Prosperity

Seaports are essential to the economic growth and vitality of our nation.

- Seaports of the Western Hemisphere combined handle about 7.8 billion tons of cargo each year and generate nearly $8.6 trillion of total economic activity.
- Western Hemisphere seaports continue to generate tens of billions of dollars in tax revenue annually, including more than $212 billion in the U.S. federal, state and local taxes.
- Between 2012 and 2016, U.S. seaports and their marine terminal partners plan to invest approximately $46 billion into infrastructure projects in and around their facilities.
- Including the indirect and induced economic impacts, the spending of the cruise lines and their crew and passengers in 2011 was responsible for the generation of $40.4 billion in gross output in the United States, a 6.8 percent increase from 2010.

Creating Jobs

Seaports directly and indirectly create new, high-paying jobs that provide family-sustaining wages for U.S. workers.

- Seaports support the employment of more than 13 million people in the U.S.
- In 2011, the cruise industry provided 347,787 jobs paying a total of more than $16.5 billion in wages and salaries.
- Seaport-related jobs account for $650 billion in personal income.
- For every $1 billion in manufactured goods exported though U.S. seaports, 15,000 American jobs are created.

Connecting the Country and the World

Seaports serve as the gateway to domestic and international trade, connecting large and small U.S. businesses to the expanding global marketplace.

- U.S. seaports are responsible for moving nearly all of the country’s overseas cargo volume...99.4% by weight and 64.1 percent by value.
- Each of our 50 states relies on at least 15 seaports to handle its imports and exports, which total more than $3.8 billion worth of goods moving in and out of U.S. seaports each day.
- Each year, U.S. seaports handle about 2 billion tons of cargo (import, export and domestic) including food, clothing, medicine, fuel, building materials, electronics and toys.
- International trade via seaports accounts for more than 32 percent of the U.S. GDP; that value is expected to increase to the equivalent of 37 percent by 2015 and 60 percent by 2030.