

Seaport Security Federal Policy

Background:

Our nation's seaports are international borders and gateways to Florida and beyond. The federal government and Florida have spent millions to protect these gateways and prevent the introduction of harmful materials into the United States. Florida seaports continue to work cooperatively with federal partners within the Department of Homeland Security – U.S. Coast Guard and U.S. Customs and Border Protection – to ensure the protection of our nation against potentially grave danger.

Current Issue:

Florida is the cruise capital of the world and a leading port of entry for international cargo. U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agents are on the front line when cruise passengers and cargo enter our country. Not only is CBP short 500 officers in the U.S. maritime environment, but their current staffing level is inadequate to meet increased passenger and cargo flows.

The 2018 omnibus appropriations bill contained \$14 billion in discretionary appropriations for CBP. The bill provides \$7 million to hire 328 new law enforcement officers, but does not include a requirement that any of these new officers be placed at maritime borders. The bill also provides \$263 million for new, non-intrusive inspection and trade equipment.

The fiscal burdens of CBP staffing and space demands are increasingly being borne by U.S. Seaports, whether paying for staffing through the 559 Reimbursable Services Authority or the Donation Acceptance Authority programs to request donations for space demands.

Recommendations:

The Florida Ports Council **supports an increase in CBP funding and staffing resources specifically directed to maritime activities at seaports of entry. Congress should also request a staffing plan from CBP concerning maritime agents.**

The Florida Ports Council recommends that **Congress review CBP operational space and administrative space demands placed upon seaports of entry. This review should include a review of cost requirements and lease agreement demands.** The Council also recommends that **Congress review CBP's Donation Acceptance Authority to ensure that the authority complies with congressional intent and that the program does not place undue burdens on seaports of entry.**

Radiation portal monitors and other technology purchased by Congress at U.S. seaports are aging. **The Florida Ports Council recommends that CBP purchase or refurbish radiation portal monitors at seaports they have identified needing new or refurbished equipment.**