



Senators Seek to Prevent Terrorism at America's Seaports February 16, 2005

Washington, DC – U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) today announced that along with Senators Arlen Specter (R-Penn.), Jon Kyl (R-Ariz.), Joe Biden (D-Del.), and George Allen (R-Va.) she is sponsoring legislation that would help to close critical gaps in the defense of our nation's seaports against terrorists and other criminals.

"Ports are the gaping hole in America's homeland security," Senator Feinstein said. **"Millions of containers pass through our ports each month, but only a fraction are inspected. And the criminal laws governing our ports are woefully inadequate. Today, for instance, there is inadequate law requiring all port employees to have tamper-proof ids and to prohibit carrying an unauthorized firearm or other dangerous weapons. It's time that we modernize these laws so that we can reduce the risk of terrorist attack on or through our ports."**

Each year, approximately 13 million shipping containers come into U.S. ports, including six million from overseas. Despite the high volume of cargo, only five percent of the containers that come into our country are inspected. This translates into millions of tons of cargo moving through our ports, with absolutely no scrutiny.

The legislation strengthens existing law and creates new crimes applying to ports and sea vessels. Specifically the law would add seaports and waterfronts to law prohibiting fraudulent access to transport facilities, in addition to creating the following new crimes:

- Failing to comply with Coast Guard directions
- Transporting or using dangerous weapons and explosives with the intent to commit a terrorist act and cause harm to passenger vessels or other ships
- Intentionally damaging navigational devices and endangering safe maritime navigation
- Transporting a person aboard a vessel who plans or has committed a terrorist act
- Causing destruction or harm to people or vessels and surrounding maritime facilities
- Carrying a dangerous weapon at a seaport or aboard a vessel
- Deliberate dumping of hazardous materials into our nation's waters

Furthermore, the legislation would increase our ability to collect necessary data to sharpen and target our enforcement and protective measures, including enhancing tracking of manifest and theft data.

In total, U.S. ports handle over 800 million tons of cargo valued at approximately \$600 billion annually. Excluding trade with Mexico and Canada, America's ports handle 95 percent of U.S. trade. To date, two of the busiest ports are in California: Los Angeles/Long Beach and Oakland.

There are 361 seaports in the United States that serve essential national interests by facilitating the flow of trade and the movement of cruise passengers, as well as supporting the effective and safe deployment of U.S. Armed Forces. These seaport facilities and other marine areas cover 3.5 million square miles of ocean area and 95,000 miles of coastline.

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