

SEPTEMBER 29, 2003

DEMOCRATS: BUSH ADMINISTRATION NEGLECTS PORT SECURITY

CHICAGO, IL - Democrats throughout the country today warned that the Bush Administration has neglected port security and that President Bush has not made available any new funding to the Coast Guard or to industry to pay for new port security standards and container security programs.

U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) joined her colleagues in calling on President Bush to ensure that federal funds are made available to ensure that shipments and containers arriving at U.S. ports are adequately inspected and these ports have the resources needed to upgrade and improve security.

"It is unimaginable that when we were attacked in 2001, only two to four percent of the six million cargo containers that come into our ports each year - and are shipped on trucks and trains throughout our communities - were inspected. The numbers in 2002 were unchanged. Now, in 2003, it is still two to four percent of containers are inspected. It is inexcusable for President Bush to continue to ignore this security nightmare. Instead of wasting billions on tax cuts for the rich, the Bush Administration must spend taxpayer dollars on ports and homeland security," Schakowsky said.

Democrats have proposed a port security plan to ensure that local port authorities receive federal funding to implement required security measures, such as installing surveillance systems and hiring security personnel; that adequate personnel and equipment are deployed to guarantee that containers are free of weapons of mass destruction; and that there are enough inspectors to ensure safety.

"Investing in our port security should be a top priority for every member of Congress and for the Bush Administration. Democrats are on board, so should the Republicans," Schakowsky concluded.

Background:

1. Check Cargo For Weapons Of Mass Destruction - Between two to 4 percent of the cargo containers entering U.S. ports are ever checked to determine their contents. The

Administration has not deployed the personnel or equipment to ensure that these containers are free of weapons of mass destruction. Specifically:

- **The National Intelligence Council (12/01) concluded that the U.S. is more likely to be attacked with WMD using non-missile means such as ship, trucks, and airplanes.**

- **Of the 7,600 Customs and Border Protection Inspectors 899 are stationed at the nation's 361 seaports, which receive 6 million containers. (Congressional Research Service May 20, 2003, crs-4)**

- **According to the GAO, programs in place to detect illegal fissile material or nuclear weapons are limited. They focus on screening a small portion of total cargo entering U.S. ports, and they are carried out without the use of adequate detection equipment. (GAO-03-297T. November 18, 2002)**

2. Implement Port Security Plans - Democrats are calling on the President to fund port security needs and infrastructure improvements. President Bush, in his FY04 budget, did not include such a request. Due to the lack of funding, many ports are struggling to ensure security. Specifically:

- **The Coast Guard estimated ports would spend \$1.1 billion on security measures mandated by the Maritime Transportation Security Act 2002 (MTSA).**

- **According to the American Association of Port Authorities, ports applied for \$1.6 billion dollars in grant requests, yet only \$388 million has been distributed.**

- **Ports are required to have MTSA security measures implemented before July 1, 2004, however at current funding levels many ports will not meet this deadline.**

- **The Coast Guard did not receive a requested \$70 million to obtain the number of personnel required to review MTSA vessel and facility plans.**