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PRESIDENT BUSH SIGNS SENATOR COLLINS' PORT SECURITY BILL INTO LAW

During a bill signing ceremony at the White House this morning, President Bush signed into law port security legislation authored by Chairman of the Homeland Security Committee, Susan Collins (R-ME) and Senator Patty Murray (D-WA). The new law includes major provisions to significantly strengthen security at our nation's ports by establishing improved cargo screening standards, providing incentives to importers to enhance their security measures, requiring the Department of Homeland Security to develop a plan for the resumption of shipping in the event of a terrorist attack, and installing radiation detectors at the 22 largest American ports by the end of next year.

President Bush said that the new law will help make the nation "more prepared, more prosperous, and more secure."

Senator Collins called today's bill signing a "major accomplishment in our efforts to strengthen security at our ports."

"Eleven million shipping containers enter American ports each year and have the potential to be the Trojan Horse of the 21st Century. This new law addresses this serious vulnerability and helps to secure America's 361 ports, which are vital elements in our nation's transportation network," Senator Collins added.

The port security bill is one of three major homeland security accomplishments of Senator Collins this year. Her chemical security legislation and bill to reform and strengthen FEMA, a major recommendation of her Committee's Hurricane Katrina investigation, were both signed into law earlier this month.

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Specifically, the new law will

- Protect Americans by making our cargo and seaports more secure – mitigating a dangerous vulnerability;
- Help prevent a lengthy shutdown of America's seaports in the event of an incident – protecting America's economy from severe disruption;
- Provide layered security at every step of the supply chain that focuses on risk to ensure that we efficiently target our limited resources on suspect cargo;
- Push the borders out so that weapons of mass destruction that could arrive in cargo containers do not reach our shores; and
- Authorizes \$400 million in port security grants for each of the next five years.

Additional provisions:

- The GreenLane, comprised of shippers who voluntarily meet the highest level of security, allows our security agencies to better identify and respond to potential threats and provides real incentives to importers to enhance their supply chain security.
- 100 Percent Scanning Pilot Program at three foreign ports to test the practicality and effectiveness of systems designed to scan 100 percent of cargo. The scanning systems must couple non-intrusive imaging and radiation detection equipment.
- Minimum security standards for all cargo containers entering the U.S. and requirements that strengthen current cargo security programs.
- Joint Operations Centers to ensure a coordinated, measured response and the resumption and flow of commerce in the event of an incident or heightened national security threat level.

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