

Mahoney Praises Port and Border Security Funds in FY08 Homeland Security Appropriations Bill

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Bill provides record number of Border Patrol Agents, increases funding for FEMA Disaster Relief, port and aviation security

(Washington, DC) - Congressman Tim Mahoney (FL-16) today praised funding for border and port security in the FY 2008 Homeland Security Appropriations Bill that the U.S. House of Representatives is expected to vote on tonight.

"This bill sends 3,000 more patrol agents to the border, increases port security funding by \$190 million, and provides key funding for FEMA's Disaster Relief Fund. For too long, our ports and borders have not gotten the funding they need to make our country more secure. This bill improves security at our ports, our borders, and our airports, while getting our first responders the resources they need to respond effectively to an emergency. This is an important step forward in making America more secure," said Congressman Tim Mahoney.

The bill provides funding for 3,000 additional border patrol agents in FY2008, bringing the total number of border patrol agents to 17,819 by the end of the fiscal year. The bill provides \$8.8 billion for Customs and Border Protection, which is \$50 million above the President's request and \$797 million above the FY 2007 level.

In addition, the bill makes port security a top priority by providing \$400 million for port security grants, which is \$190 million more than both the President's request and the FY 2007 level. Ports throughout Florida have benefited from this grant program in the past, including the Port of Palm Beach, which was recently awarded \$1.5 million under the Department of Homeland Security's Port Security Grant Program.

The bill also funds the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Disaster Relief Fund at \$1.7 billion above the FY 2007 level. FEMA's Disaster Relief Fund is the main source of federal disaster recovery assistance for state and local government when a disaster occurs.

Other key priorities in the bill include funding for training and equipment for first responders. The bill rejects the President's \$1 billion cut to key first responder programs and provides funding above the FY 2007 level. The bill also provides \$849 million for explosive detection systems at airports, which is 62 percent above the FY 2007 level and 16 percent above the President's request. Funding in this bill will require the TSA to double the amount of cargo screened on passenger aircraft.

In addition, the FY 2008 Homeland Security Appropriations Bill includes strong accountability measures to ensure taxpayer dollars are well spent and accounted for. Accountability provisions include requirements that contracts to be

competitively bid as well as improvements in acquisition oversight.

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