



# MARITIME EXCHANGE

for the Delaware River and Bay

*Leading the Way to Port Progress*

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*Sent to tristate delegation*

May 22, 2019

Nowhere is the need for a sustainable Customs and Border Protection workforce more apparent than at our nation's seaports. On behalf of the Delaware River maritime community, this letter asks you to support S. 1004, the *Securing America's Ports of Entry Act of 2019*.

Locally, CBP averages 20 vacant positions at any given time, largely due to retirements and turnover. Further, because it takes approximately two years to recruit and train CBP officers for positions that cover multiple sea- and airport terminals, CBP is perennially short-staffed. This severely impedes timely cargo clearance, forcing port customers to suffer costly delays. S. 1004 seeks to rectify this shortfall.

While inadequate CBP staffing has long affected our port's competitive standing, of equal concern is the planned diversion of CBP officers to the southern border. This troubling policy raises several key questions.

- Will DHS coordinate personnel deployments with the ports/terminals based on volumes, including seasonal freight surges? This is critical given that from December to April, our ports handle an influx of perishable fruits and vegetables, for which timely clearance is paramount. It is also a concern during summer months when CBP officers are generally moved from seaports to airports to handle increased passenger volumes.
- How will temporary redeployments be backfilled?
- Will port operators need to fund additional staff hours for timely cargo clearance?

Simply stated, Delaware River ports cannot afford either the loss of officers or the costs of overtime funding. Further, when CBP was funded to hire 2,000 additional staff in FY15, fewer than 20 agents were assigned to seaports. This proposed legislation is the appropriate vehicle to correct this unfortunate situation.

Thank you for considering this request to support S. 1004. Please contact me at 215-925-2615 or [dennis.rochford@maritimedelriv.com](mailto:dennis.rochford@maritimedelriv.com) with any questions you may have or for additional information.

Sincerely,

Dennis Rochford  
President

cc: Lisa Himber, Vice President