

Washington, DC (April 25, 2012) – Rep. Gus Bilirakis (FL-09), Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Communications, on Thursday will host a Congressional Hearing featuring Richard Wainio, Port Director and CEO of the Tampa Port Authority.

As leader of the largest port in Florida, both in terms of cargo tonnage and land area, Wainio will address the vital role ports play in fueling local, state and national economies.

"As our economy continues to recover, ports will play a significant role in the country's return to prosperity," Bilirakis said. "Tampa Bay is lucky to have such a pivotal port in its backyard, and we must ensure that it continues to serve as a local economic driver and as a gateway to national and international commerce."

Thursday's hearing specifically will address the impact that federal grant programs have on the port system, particularly when regarding national security.

"On behalf of the American Association of Port Authorities, I am pleased to offer a local perspective from the Port of Tampa on an issue of national importance, the securing of our nation's seaports," Wainio said. "The Port Security Grant program plays a key role in meeting this goal, and I am grateful for the opportunity to offer my thoughts on how to ensure this program can best meet its intended objectives."

The Port of Tampa is West Central Florida's largest economic engine, and has an \$8 billion economic impact while supporting nearly 100,000 jobs.

Update: Below, find Wainio's opening statement: