

## Rep. Bilirakis's Resolution Promoting Maritime Security Passes the House

WASHINGTON (18 Oct.) -- On

Wednesday, the U.S. House of Representatives unanimously passed a resolution, H. Res. 549, authored by Rep. Gus M. Bilirakis (R-Fla.), recognizing the importance of increased maritime domain awareness and supporting the goals of America's Waterway Watch (AWW) program.

A maritime homeland security public awareness program administered by the U.S. Coast Guard, AWW seeks to educate and empower America's 70 million recreational and commercial boaters to keep watch over the nation's maritime borders. The program specifically provides education resources for improved awareness and a central 24-hour call center, (877) 24-WATCH, to report any suspicious or unusual activities on or around the country's waterways.

"September 11th taught us that all Americans have a shared responsibility for our country's security, which is why I am pleased to highlight the importance of a program that encourages citizens to do their part to strengthen our homeland defenses," said Congressman Bilirakis.

"This program is a sensible and reasonable step toward bolstering our maritime defenses without imposing costly and confusing new regulations on recreational boaters, who play an important economic role in my district."

"The U.S. Coast Guard plays an integral role in the success of the Port of Tampa," said Richard Wainio, Port Director and CEO of the Tampa Port Authority, in a letter to Bilirakis. "The Coast Guard's efforts are augmented by the vigilant volunteer activities of the many participants in our area who take part in America's Waterway Watch program," he said. "I commend you for focusing attention on this vital program and the importance of increasing maritime domain awareness."

"Just like the Coast Watch Program of World War II, America's Waterways Watch enlists the aid of our greatest resource, our citizens - especially boaters, port workers, and others on or near the water. Through the eyes and ears of our devoted citizens, we will make all of America safer and more secure," said Captain Joseph A. Servidio, Captain of the Port and Commander of Coast Guard Sector St. Petersburg.

To report suspicious activity, call the National Response Center at 1-877-24WATCH or 1-800-424-8802. In the case of immediate danger to life or property, contact local law enforcement by dialing 911.

- Learn more about AWW at: <http://www.americaswaterwaywatch.org>.

- Download a brochure about America's Waterway Watch, [here](#).