

## Rep. Bilirakis Reminds Travelers of New Border Crossing Procedures

WASHINGTON (31 Jan.) &ndash; U.S. Rep. Gus M. Bilirakis (R-Fla.), member of the House Committee on Homeland Security, on Thursday joined with U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CPB) Commissioner W. Ralph Basham and Port Director and CEO of the Tampa Port Authority Richard Wainio, to remind travelers that today, January 31, 2008, is the deadline when improved identification procedures will be implemented at the nation's land and sea borders.

Starting today, oral declarations of citizenship from U.S. and Canadian citizens will no longer be allowed at land and sea border crossings. Citizens from the U.S. and Canada will now have to show proof of citizenship by presenting either: a "trusted traveler" document; a passport; or government-issued photo identification such as a driver's license, plus proof of citizenship, such as a birth certificate.

Congressman Bilirakis says the more stringent requirements will help to fill a vulnerability gap at America's border crossings.

"The implementation of more stringent identification requirements at border crossings was a deficiency raised by the 9/11 Commission and subsequently addressed by Congress in 2004," said Congressman Bilirakis. "While it may take some time for all travelers to be acclimated to the new rules, I have been assured that DHS will work hard to implement these new regulations with flexibility and understanding, and that exceptions will continue to be made for those who do not meet all of the new identification requirements. As a member of Homeland Security Committee, which has oversight of this issue, I will continue to monitor the progress of this transition very closely."

CBP Commissioner W. Ralph Basham says his agency will work with travelers and continue to educate the public about these new changes.

"We feel that ultimately these changes will help create not only more secure borders, but more efficient borders as well &ndash; whether at a land border port of entry or a seaport," said Commissioner Basham. "We will be flexible in this phase, which is intended to raise awareness and help travelers get adjusted to the changes, and we thank Congressman Bilirakis for his commitment to also getting the message out."

Locally, Port Director Wainio said he recognizes the challenges these new procedures may pose to those traveling via the Port of Tampa, and says that he and his staff will work to assist all travelers as they adapt to these new changes.

"The Port of Tampa is the largest economic engine in West Central Florida and one of the most diversified ports in the nation. Key to the Port's success has been the strength of the cruise industry," said Port Director Wainio. "The Port makes every effort to ensure that visitors who are cruising from Tampa have a very positive experience while in our great community."

For more information about the new traveler document requirements, log on to the CBP website at <http://www.cbp.gov/>.

#### Additional Reading

- Bilirakis Blog -- DHS: New Border Procedures Fast Approaching
- U.S. Customs and Border Protection -- Important Change in International Land and Sea Travel Document Procedures