

**The Future of Port Security: The GreenLane Maritime Security Act
Hearing Statement
Senator Joe Lieberman
April 5, 2006**

Thank you, Madam Chairman. And thank you for holding this hearing on a gap in our homeland security that just should not be as wide as it is four and a half years after September 11, 2001. I'm talking, of course, about port and cargo security – our lifeline to the global economy.

On a daily basis, five million tons of goods cross our borders whether by ship, train, or truck. Ninety-five percent of these goods arrive in the 21,000 containers that enter U.S. ports each day. The Administration has told us in testimony before this committee that somewhere between 5 and 6 percent of those containers are physically inspected - up from about 2 or 3 percent several years ago. I'm grateful for the progress, but it simply isn't enough.

The fact is, at any given moment, our government still has too little knowledge about the contents of thousands of multi-ton containers that are loaded onto trucks, trains, and barges for shipment into and across the heart of this nation every day.

The nightmare scenario we all want to avoid is the smuggling of a dirty bomb, or God forbid, a nuclear bomb within a shipping container. We know that criminals have for a long time used cargo containers to smuggle drugs, firearms, and people into this country. We know container have been a means for transporting terrorists and their

weapons as well. And we know that a terrorist attack on any one of our major ports could cause billions of dollars of damage to the economy just in the short term.

Given the irreparable damage that would result from the smuggling of WMD across our borders in a shipping container, our only option is to protect ourselves before it's too late. And that means directing people, technology, and our resources toward the goal of greater port and cargo security.

Senators Collins, Murray, Coleman and myself are of like mind about this: We need a comprehensive, coordinated, and multi layered strategy to protect not just cargo and cargo containers, but ships, piers, ports, and maritime workers as well. We need to do this to protect our national and economic security before terrorists strike.

The GreenLane Maritime Cargo Security Act, introduced again just last month, would fulfill that goal. It offers a comprehensive approach to securing the international supply chain through a coordinated approach across all levels of government, the private sector, and with our overseas trading partners. Not only would it improve our security, it would expedite trade with those governments and shippers that share our security goal. At the same time, it would encourage innovation and provide financial assistance to strengthen terrorist prevention and response efforts at our port facilities.

The Chairman has outlined the bill and the many important things it does. I would simply like to mention what I think is very important and that is the Port Security

Grant Program. The Administration has tried to eliminate a dedicated Port Security Grant Program from the federal budget for three years in a row, despite evidence that it is crucial to our ability to improve the physical security of our ports. Congress has rejected the Administration proposal as many times as the Administration has proposed it. The legislation that is before us today would ensure every port in the U.S. is eligible to apply for a grant, although they would still have to persuade the Department they are at risk.

Madam Chairman, our legislation would minimize the impact of a terrorist attack on our supply chain, provide a smooth transition back to normal shipping in the event of a temporary shutdown, encourage investment in inspection technologies, and put our ports on the path to better security.

We have a choice. We can await disaster to befall us. Or we can act proactively to prevent it with a coordinated strategy to protect the free-flow of our trade. Let us make the wise choice to establish the structure and provide the resources necessary to protect the American people properly.

Welcome to our colleagues from the Senate and House who are here today to help us understand this proposal. And I look forward to hearing from our other distinguished witnesses representing the Department of Homeland Security, labor, business, and ports who know first hand what our vulnerabilities are. Thank you.