in February saying, "This is not a pie-in-the-sky idea. Since January 2005, every container entering the truck gates of two of the world's busiest container terminals, in Hong Kong, has passed through scanning and radiation detection devices. Images of the containers' contents are then stored on computers so that they can be scrutinized by American or other customs authorities almost in real time. Customs inspectors can then issue orders not to load a container that worries them."

If Hong Kong terminals can do it, certainly America can require other terminals to do it. The Hong Kong pilot program has shown that 100% scanning can work without slowing down commerce. If two of the busiest terminals in the world have been successful at 100% scanning, it is time that Congress insists on it for those who wish to ship to our ports—it is what we must do to protect the lives of all Americans.

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of Security and Accountability for Every Port (SAFE Port) Act, H.R. 4954. In the wake of the Dubai Ports World controversy, it is long past time to seriously address the issue of port security.

The ports of the United States are an economic gateway to the rest of the globe. They are vital to our economy and to our national security. Today, seaports handle 95 percent of our nation's foreign trade valued at over $1 trillion. This is an issue that is important to my constituents and to all citizens of New Jersey. The security of Port Newark-Elizabeth Marine Terminal, which is the 15th busiest port in the world, is something we need to address.

Yet, five years after the terrible attacks of September 11th, our nation's seaports remain remarkably vulnerable and real security concerns persist. Only 5 percent of the cargo containers that enter the United States are inspected despite the potential presence of dangerous cargo, including nuclear weapons. This national security risk is a result of the failure of the current Administration to seriously address this essential issue. This bill takes important steps necessary to help secure out nation's ports and prevent dangerous materials from entering our country.

However, the bill is far from perfect. The Republican Majority wants to play word games with port security rather than provide real security to all Americans. Today they will try to convince Americans that 100 percent of all cargo containers are screened. But, it is important to notice that they are only talking about screening, meaning a review of the paper manifest of the cargo container—not a physical inspection. I support the inspection of 100 percent of all containers, and tragically we only inspect 5 percent of all cargo containers entering the United States today. That means that 95 percent of the cargo containers entering our country could contain nuclear, biological or chemical weapons but because we have not inspected them we would never know. This needs to change.

Hong Kong has successfully implemented a 100 percent inspection program at its ports. Unfortunately, my Republican colleagues denied Democrats the opportunity to offer an amendment that would require the United States to implement a similar program with 100 percent inspection of containers coming in to our country. Americans want real security, not word games.

The 9/11 Commission recently gave the Administration and Republican-controlled Congress a "D" for cargo screening. Still, the Congress has only appropriated a total of $883 million for port security despite the Coast Guard's stated need of $5.4 billion over 10 years to adequately secure our seaports. Last year, I voted for the Democratic Homeland Security substitute that would have appropriated an additional $400 million for port security funding for Fiscal Year 2006, but it was rejected by the Republican Majority, who is more interested in giving tax breaks the wealthiest Americans. We can and must do better for the security of the American people.

That is why I am glad that the SAFE Port Act would authorize $400 million annually for port security grant programs to be distributed based on risk. This money is desperately needed by our nation's ports to ensure that terrorist do not smuggle dangerous materials in to our country. Further, this bill requires the Department of Homeland Security to hire an additional 200 port-of-entry inspectors every year for the next six years. These additional employees will help ensure that high risk containers are actually inspected.

The SAFE Port Act represents a bipartisan and thoughtful effort to address the important issue of port security. I am pleased that this bill authorizes approximately $5 billion over six years to improve port and cargo security programs. This bill requires the Department of Homeland Security to finally develop a plan to deploy radiation detection systems at all American ports. It also strengthens the Container Security Initiative. Further, it authorizes almost $2 billion for the Coast Guard to upgrade and replace its deteriorating equipment and ships.

The SAFE Port Act is a good bill and I urge my colleagues to support it. But we need more work remains to be done. We need to require 100 percent inspection of all cargo coming in to the United States. Anything less jeopardizes the security of the American people.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Chairman, I rise in strong support of H.R. 4954, SAFE Ports Act. Port Security has been on everyone's lips for the past two months with the proposed sale of the six major U.S. ports to the Dubai World Ports, a state-sponsored company backed by The United Arab Emirates. However, we all realize that port security was not really addressed by the outcome on that deal. What we still have at our ports is the free movement of cargo from just about every place in the world. Something must be done to establish security at our American ports. Today, we have an opportunity to do just that by supporting, H.R. 4954, SAFE Ports Act.

The major provisions of the bill address a number of issues that became even more relevant after the Dubai debacle. One, the bill establishes security standards for all cargo containers entering the U.S. after six months of enactment. This is long overdue, since containers represent the major device being handled by our Ports. The Port of Los Angeles handled 7.3 million containers in 2005, and is expected to handle even more this year, setting new records. The bill also authorizes a study of the current radiation and nuclear detection scanning technology. It came to light that this type of technology in this country is not up to par with many of our trading partners. Moreover, the bill creates a dedicated stream of funding for port security, which is necessary to maintain the level of security recommended by our own Coast Guard.

In addition, the bill would establish a Port security worker training and exercise program. This would ensure the readiness of these workers, particularly in a changing threat environment. Port security personnel must be prepared for these threats. The bill also accelerates the U.S. Coast Guard Deepwater program. Further, the bill established maritime command centers to ensure a coordinated response to our Port security needs.

Similar measures have advanced in the Senate, where Senators STEVENS and INOUYE have introduced S. 1052, the Transportation Security Improvement Act of 2005, and Senators COLLINS and MURRAY the Greenlane Maritime Act, S. 2008. These bills require marine terminal operators to comply with Coast Guard regulations to secure cargo and terminal facilities at all of our nation's ports, regardless of who operates them.

Inspections of all containers and security measures like the security IDs are important to security. Port Security is a major issue in the State of California, and of major concern to me is security at the Port of Los Angeles, one of the nation's busiest ports. The Port of Los Angeles is the largest container complex operating in the U.S., and the 8th busiest container port in the world. When combined with the Port of Long Beach the two ports rank as the 5th busiest in the world. The Los Angeles Port handles 162 million metric tons of cargo (7.3 million containers) in 2005, representing approximately $150 billion.

What is astounding is that the Los Angeles Port covers 7500 areas, 8300—water and—4200 land. This means that the Port of Los Angeles has 43 miles of water front facilities to secure. The City of Los Angeles cannot provide adequate security alone for the Port, but in cooperation with the federal government we can begin to address the concerns of workers, port and terminal operators, and others, by supporting this bill.

Mr. KING of New York, Mr. Chairman, I have discussed this issue with the ranking member, Mr. THOMPSON, and it is important to note today, as we consider the SAFE Port Act, that the Committee on Homeland Security is concerned that the list of criminal offenses that will initially disqualify a worker from holding a maritime transportation security card includes vague and overly broad crimes. The proposed list of disqualifying offenses appears to go significantly beyond the already existing mandate of exclusion and we hope that TSA and the Coast Guard, as it finalizes its rules, will narrow and limit the list of disqualifying criminal offenses to more accurately identify individuals that pose a terrorism security risk and who are therefore unworthy to hold a maritime transportation security card.

Mr. FITZPATRICK of Pennsylvania. Mr. Chairman, 5 years after the September 11th attack, our nation remains vulnerable to an attack, an attack that could come through our ports. Our maritime system consists of more than 300 sea and river ports with more than 3,700 cargo and passenger terminals nationwide. Additionally, thousands of shipments to the United States originate in the ports of nations that may harbor terrorists. Although Customs and Border Protection analyzes cargo