

## Castle: Announcement that Department of Homeland Security will Accelerate TWIC Program Implementation is Critical for Port of Wilmington -- April 25, 2006

Castle has been pressuring Department of Homeland Security to accelerate worker identification program

Washington, D.C. -- Delaware Congressman Mike Castle today expressed his support for the announcement by the Transportation Security Administration and the U.S. Coast Guard that they will accelerate the Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC) program. This announcement comes following constant pressure from Castle on the Department of Homeland Security and TSA to expedite the implementation of the program.

In 2002, TWIC pilot programs were initiated at the Port of Wilmington and 33 other locations across the country by the Transportation Security Administration and the Coast Guard to better ensure that only properly cleared and authorized personnel gain access to secure areas of our transportation system, including U.S. ports. Currently, the pilot program at the Port of Wilmington is being supported by TSA-issued equipment, but will be significantly improved with the implementation of the national TWIC program.

"I am extremely pleased by the announcement today that the TWIC program will finally be getting the attention it deserves. Since the terrorist attacks of September 11th, not enough attention has been paid to soft terrorist targets like ports and rail. The safety of our ports should not be taken lightly and I think the announcement today is a sign that our message regarding TWIC has been heard and progress is being made toward preventing future possible attacks. In the absence of a federal credentialing program, Wilmington and other U.S. ports would be left without a truly secure system for running background checks and ensuring that only authorized personnel have access to vulnerable areas at U.S. ports -- TWIC fills this gap," Castle said.

Congressman Castle participated in a hearing regarding TWIC and port security in January and initiated a letter sent to Department of Homeland Security Secretary, Michael Chertoff at the end of March expressing serious concern regarding the Department's ongoing delay of the TWIC program. The text of the letter is copied below.

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March 29, 2006

The Honorable Michael Chertoff

Secretary

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Naval Security Station

Nebraska and Massachusetts Avenues, NW

Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Chertoff:

In recent weeks, the American people have expressed increased concern for the security of our nation's seaports. As the Department of Homeland Security works to develop an effective port security strategy, we ask that you do everything within your ability to expedite the implementation of the Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC) program.

Currently, all ports in the United States are required to check identification and control access to maritime facilities and vessels, however there is no uniform, effective system for validating identities and determining the level of threat posed to maritime security. According to media reports, your Department recently conducted an internal investigation, which found that thousands of secure access identification cards have been issued to personnel with serious criminal backgrounds and false identities. Shockingly, these identification credentials were issued in the absence of sufficient background checks, leaving port officials unable to effectively ensure security.

As you know, in 2002, Congress passed the Maritime Transportation Security Act, which called for Transportation Worker Identification Credentials to be developed and issued to all employees at ports and other sensitive transportation posts. The TWIC program was initiated by the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and the Coast Guard to better ensure that only properly cleared and authorized personnel gain access to secure areas of our transportation system. Since that time, secure and interoperable identification credentials and standards have been developed and tested by over 200,000 participants in TWIC pilot programs at 34 different locations in Delaware, Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, California, and Florida.

The TWIC program went through four specific development phases, and the final prototype testing phase was completed in the summer of 2005. The result of this process is a tamper-resistant credential that contains biometric information about the holder, which effectively renders the card useless to anyone other than the properly screened, authorized user. Unfortunately, bureaucratic slowdowns and unforeseen obstacles have put this program over two years behind schedule. While testing of the cards is now complete, a TSA official recently testified that the TWIC program is not likely to be implemented nationally until at least mid-2007. Furthermore, despite the continued vulnerability of our nation's seaports, TSA has already ended the sustainment phase at most of the ports that participated in the TWIC pilot program, forcing these ports to relinquish the federally-monitored security program until a final rule is issued sometime next year.

Without a uniform system, we are concerned that ports and other vulnerable locations will be forced to implement their own secure identification programs, which likely will not be interoperable with the final federal TWIC program. Almost five years after the terrorist attacks of 2001, thousands of individuals have access to U.S. ports, despite the fact that no national system has been implemented to accurately screen applicants and assess risk. The TWIC program has been thoroughly tested and proven effective in verifying the identities of authorized dockworkers, merchant mariners, and rail and trucking personnel. It is crucial that you do everything within your ability to make certain that the TWIC program is implemented at all U.S. ports as soon as possible.

The Dubai Ports World controversy has shed much needed light on the status of security procedures at U.S. ports and it is clear that our government must do everything possible to improve our ability to protect such critical infrastructure. Please inform us of the steps your Department is taking to accelerate the implementation of the TWIC program. We look forward to working closely with you on this critical security issue and welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter further at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Mike Castle

Frank A. LoBiondo

Todd Platts

Jim Gerlach

Mark Foley

Melissa A. Hart

John E. Sweeney

Ken Calvert

Ginny Brown-Waite

Clay E. Shaw, Jr.