

Written Statement of
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Subcommittee on Border Security, Facilitation and Operations
Homeland Security Committee
United States House of Representatives
“Assessing the State of America’s Seaports: Equipping for a Reopened Economy.”
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Good morning Chair Barragan, Ranking Member Higgins, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to speak with you today regarding the current state of the Port of Lake Charles, including impacts since 2020 from Covid to devastating hurricanes.

I am the executive director of the Port of Lake Charles in Louisiana. I was born and raised in Lake Charles and, except for a four-year stint of working and going to graduate school in New Orleans, I have lived here my whole life. I have a Master’s in Business Administration, I am a Certified Public Accountant and am a Professional Port Manager. I joined the Port in 2003 as the Director of Administration and Finance, was promoted to Deputy Executive Director in 2017 and was hired as the Executive Director in 2020.

We are the 14th-busiest Port district in America. 2022 marks the 95th anniversary of the Calcasieu Ship Channel as a global shipping destination.

America depends on Lake Charles, Louisiana more than it realizes. The Port of Lake Charles, and the Calcasieu Ship Channel that connects to the Gulf of Mexico, are referred to as “America’s Energy Corridor.”

Our port, and our city, support energy in three ways:

- **First**, our region is a national leader in oil and gas. From exploration, drilling and refining gasoline to creating other petrochemical products. The Port of Lake Charles supports the full spectrum of the industry.

- **Second**, the Lake Charles area is a leader in moving LNG all over the globe. Liquefied natural gas terminals operate at world-class levels here, and the sector is growing. Those terminals are built on land leased from our port, and they rely on the services provided by the Port and our private-sector partners.
- **Finally**, our port is an emerging national pathway for wind power components. In just two years, we have moved more than fifteen-hundred wind components. We unload them from vessels and rail them to wind farms across America.

We are also pursuing gulf offshore wind initiatives as a potential manufacturer of the components and to provide a terminal to marshal the components onto vessels to be installed in the Gulf. In doing this, we will meet the growing need for green energy choices.

As you can see, the Port of Lake Charles serves everything from traditional fossil fuels to the newest in renewable-energy technologies.

That's what makes us America's Energy Corridor.

And that's why the nation depends on us.

What we do affects the pocketbooks of your own constituents:

- The price they pay at the pump for gasoline
- Their supply of lumber — for the home improvement nationwide, and for disaster repairs and reconstruction along the Gulf Coast

The past two years have brought unprecedented challenges.

The effects of Covid-19 severely impacted our tonnage and related revenues. Our operating revenues declined by nearly \$5 million due to Covid in 2020 and the impacts continued to be felt in 2021. These issues were compounded by the strongest hurricane in our region's recorded history — Hurricane Laura, in August of 2020 and two months later Hurricane Delta hit — leaving our Port, and our region, with unprecedented damage. Entire portions of our complex were decimated. The damage to the Port is estimated at \$241 million ... and counting. We lost three custom ship loaders and two custom ship unloaders. Not only are they very expensive, but they require a long lead time. We are able to load ships and unload using ships gear and a mobile harbor crane, but the operating costs are significantly higher than pre-hurricane levels. We also lost 85% of our covered storage at City Docks and will be utilizing temporary tension fabric buildings for storage to fill the void until we able to replace the damaged structures.

Without these facilities becoming operational, cargo owners will incur additional costs, the Port will potentially lose the cargoes and area industries, local labor and the local farming community will be devastated.

What has truly hampered our recovery, however, is this:

The lack of federal disaster relief, beyond FEMA assistance and federal Covid relief. Although we received funding from the various Covid relief bills, it has not nearly been enough to deal with the devastation from the hurricanes. Although Congress did pass a supplemental bill in September to finally address some of the pressing needs from the hurricanes and other disasters from 2020, it is simply not enough. Please help SWLA, we need your help by providing additional disaster recovery funding.

I appreciate the opportunity you've given me to explain why our port, and the Lake Charles industrial complex as a whole, are an economic backbone of America.

We are not just some place that's far away, that had a bad year, that needs money.

We do America's heavy lifting. America needs us. Your constituents need us.

Please help convince your colleagues on Capitol Hill of the immediate and overdue help we need.

Thank you.