

**Committee on Ways and Means**  
**Member Day Hearing**  
**1100 Longworth House Office Building**  
**Thursday, September 14, 2023**  
**9:00 AM**

Statement for the Record

Thank you, Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Neal, for the opportunity to speak in support of my bipartisan bill H.R.529 *the Extending Limits of U.S. Customs Waters Act* to extend the customs waters territory of the United States from 12 to 24 nautical miles from the baselines of the United States.

This bipartisan, bicameral bill would update several existing laws and extend the United States' contiguous zone from the 12 nautical mile limit of the U.S. Customs Waters to 24 nautical miles. By extending jurisdiction into the near shore waters and doubling the area of operation, Customs and Border Protection's Air and Marine Operations (AMO), United States Coast Guard (USCG), and other federal authorities can properly enforce U.S. customs, fiscal, immigration, and sanitary laws at sea. International law recognizes that coastal nations, like the United States, may establish such a contiguous zone beyond its territorial waters. AMO remains limited to exercising its authorities to the 12 nautical mile limit of U.S. Customs Waters, with few exceptions.

The USCG and NOAA have adopted these extensions several years ago and have been using the authorities as intended. The U.S. Customs Service, having a very small marine program at the time of these proclamations, did not pursue the effort to adopt or seek inclusion within Title 19.

With modern technology improving the performance and speed of maritime vessels, including those used to violate U.S. law or evade law enforcement, limiting AMO operations to 12 nautical miles puts responding law enforcement vessels at a significant disadvantage. This often prevents the interdiction of vessels in time to prevent their escaping capture. Extending AMO authorities to operate out to 24 nautical miles would increase detection, interdiction, and ultimately prosecution of those who are attempting to bring illegal cargoes (for example, illegal narcotics and human trafficking victims) into the nation. Having the authority to operate against these threats out to 24 nautical miles would increase the likelihood of successfully preventing illegal smuggling, unsafe entry, or other violations of U.S. law. Extending our law enforcement authorities out to the 24 nautical mile limit of the contiguous zone is crucial for AMO.

*The Extending Limits of U.S. Customs Waters Act* will allow U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Air and Marine Operations and the U.S. Coast Guard the jurisdiction necessary to keep American families safe from drug and human traffickers. This legislation is mission critical to protect American families and is crucial to stopping the flow of illegal immigration and deadly drugs like fentanyl into our country. I thank the Committee for providing this opportunity and urge you to consider this bipartisan bill.

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Thank you, Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Neal, for the opportunity to speak in support of my bipartisan bill H.R. 1568 the Moving American's Privacy Protection Act to require U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to remove personally identifiable information (PII), which includes Social Security and passport numbers, from cargo manifests before public disclosure. This legislation passed the Senate by unanimous consent on March 9th, 2023.

Currently, CBP requires manifest sheets, which includes PII, in order to disclose and document the cargo of incoming vessels for customs and security purposes. In 1984, the public disclosure of certain manifest information was required. The original intent of this provision was to increase competition, to facilitate better public analysis of import trends, and allow port authorities and transportation companies to more easily identify potential customers and changes in their industries. However, in recent years, PII of relocating individuals has been released, enabling identity theft, credit card fraud, and unwanted solicitations.

The personal information of every American should be safe and secure. However, due to the current public disclosure of cargo manifests, our service members and their families experience a higher risk of identity theft and fraud as they move abroad in service to our Nation. It is critical we take the necessary steps to protect them against dangerous and fraudulent activity. The Moving American's Privacy Protection Act would help to protect the private information of our service members and all Americans. I thank the Committee for providing this opportunity and hope that your committee sees the need for this change and will pass this important legislation to protect all Americans.