



# Regulatory Clouds Threaten PortMiami

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I get excited every time I visit our vibrant PortMiami. The constant activity at the “Cargo Gateways to the Americas” is emblematic of the city’s energy and international flavor.

Cruise ships bring travelers eager to explore our beautiful city and take vacationers to far-off places. Cargo ships usher in a panoply of produce from our neighbors—asparagus from Peru, bananas from Ecuador, blueberries from Chile, melons from Guatemala, and pineapples from Honduras. The comings and goings of countless aircraft, cargo and passenger vessels, trucks, and railcars is like a never-ending dance.

My mantra in Congress is “Jobs! Jobs! Jobs!,” and PortMiami is a major employer in my district. Increased agricultural trade with Latin America and the Caribbean has generated millions of dollars for our economy and spurred investments in industry that has fostered job growth in South Florida and around the state. All told, PortMiami contributes roughly \$27 billion annually to the local economy and employs over 200,000 individuals in South Florida.

However, a proposed federal regulation will undermine PortMiami’s economic vibrancy.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has proposed changes to the fees it charges for conducting agricultural quarantine inspections (AQI) at U.S. ports of entry. While these APHIS inspections are critical for Florida given our species-attracting climate and pest-vulnerable agricultural industries, like citrus, and AQI fees have not been increased in 10 years, any increases must be fair, reasonable and the product of a transparent process with stakeholder engagement.

Herein lies the problem: APHIS did not adequately consult with affected stakeholders prior to proposing the rulemaking, resulting in fee increases of 52 to 218 percent and new fees

that could be duplicative. These proposed changes will disproportionately affect the state of Florida and no port would be as adversely affected as PortMiami.

APHIS proposes a new \$375 per pest treatment fee and a \$2 fee for each international cruise-vessel passenger. The proposal also does away with the cap on fees for commercial vessels, which is currently \$7,440 per year. By removing the cap, a commercial cargo vessel traveling to the United States from the Caribbean each week would be slammed with \$42,900 in fees each year.

Some cruise vessels would face fees as high as \$600,000 a year. New and increased fees would go into effect 60 days after the rule is finalized, an unreasonably short time for Florida industries to adjust to such exorbitant fees.

PortMiami cannot withstand this type of hit.

PortMiami, the “Cruise Capital of the World,” has been the busiest cruise-passenger port anywhere for 20 years, with a record 4.8 million multiday cruise passengers using the port in 2014. The proposed per-passenger fee would cost the entire cruise industry \$22 million annually, with PortMiami paying the lion’s share of that amount.

Also, more than 90 percent of all international flowers imported into the United States come into Miami International Airport. Per APHIS regulation, many of the imported flowers and commodities must be treated for pests. The cost of the proposed pest treatments would place an extreme financial burden on the importer community, the overwhelming majority of which are small businesses. In some cases, the pest treatment fee would be more than the cost of the fumigation service and the value of the commodity being treated.

Make no mistake, if the proposed AQI regulation is finalized, PortMiami would be negatively affected and jobs threatened.

Therefore, I have introduced H.R. 1091, the Fair and Transparent Stakeholder Involvement Fee Act of 2015, which requires APHIS to go back to the drawing board and work with stakeholders, including importers, cruise-lines operators, cargo vessel and aircraft operators, truckers, fumigators, port directors and public officials, to propose fair and reasonable AQI fees.

We must do what is right to maintain a vibrant PortMiami economy and jobs in Florida.