
STOP the GRINCH Act

While the COVID-19 pandemic drastically increased e-commerce sales, the surge in online goods has exposed long-standing problems with the U.S. supply chain, including our truck driver shortage, port capacity and technology, as well as port labor challenges – to name a few.

Few can forget the images of the unprecedented backlog of up to 100 vessels anchored off the coast of California just waiting their turn to unload their cargo. Americans are already experiencing consumer product shortages with White House officials warning that our supply chain challenges will affect the availability of products for the upcoming holiday seasons.

But the impacts are even greater than holiday shipping delays. The supply chain crisis is already negatively impacting businesses bottom lines, increasing consumer prices, and contributing to our broader inflationary pressures. It is time that Congress lead our nation with a targeted response to, at least temporarily, address our supply chain challenges and help our nation weather this storm.

In response, Senator Lee is introducing the Surpassing Temporary Obstructions at Ports and Guaranteeing Resources to Increase the Nation's Commercial Health Act (STOP the GRINCH Act)

Bill Specifics:

The “STOP the GRINCH” Act would authorize several temporary regulatory waivers and actions in order to help alleviate some of the stress in our freight network supply chain. Specifically, the bill would:

- Require the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) to temporarily waive (with some exceptions) the trucking hours of service requirements for truck drivers and motor carriers who are transporting cargo directly to or from a U.S. port. The particulars of this waiver are modeled directly after the current FMCSA COVID-19 waiver in effect that trucking companies are currently using to transport cargo used to fight COVID-19.
- Require the FMCSA to temporarily allow 18-year-old drivers to receive a temporary commercial driver's license for (1) the transportation of cargo to or from a U.S. port or (2) to assume the commercial operations of a truck driver who has been re-routed to a U.S. port.
- Require the Coast Guard and the Transportation Security Administration to jointly prioritize and expedite the consideration of Transportation Worker Identification Credentials (TWIC) applications for those workers needed to provide direct assistance to a U.S. port.
- Require the Department of Homeland Security to provide temporary waivers of the Jones Act for vessels that are (1) transporting cargo from a U.S. port to another U.S. port in order to relieve a port's congestion, backlog, or delay or (2) engaging in lightering operations, which includes transporting cargo from a ship that is anchored off the coast of the United States to a U.S. port.
- Require the Secretaries of Agriculture, Interior, and Transportation to jointly consult ocean carriers, ports, railroads, and truckers to identify and designate plots of federal land that could temporarily (no more than 6 months) be used for the storage and transfer of empty cargo containers in order to ease the congestion and backlog at U.S. ports.
- Require the Secretary of Defense to take an inventory of intermodal equipment (including truck chassis) and permit trucking companies to use such equipment provided that use of the equipment does not affect our national security and the truck company agrees to reimburse for any damage to the equipment. Gives the Secretary of Defense the discretion (in consultation with the Secretaries of Agriculture, Interior, and Transportation) to impose a fee for use of such equipment. Such funds (if imposed) could only be used for remediation of federal land that was used for cargo container storage.

For more information concerning this bill or to be added as a cosponsor, contact Joel Wellum (joel_wellum@lee.senate.gov) or Sophia Bagley (sophia_bagley@lee.senate.gov) in Senator Lee's office.