

U.S. port security crucial

By Marilyn Musgrave

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Last week, sitting at home eating dinner, you and your family were likely interrupted by the latest tool in political campaigning — it is a trend that is spreading nationwide but is largely taking place in our area.

A shadowy organization called American Family Voices — which is based in Washington D.C., recorded an outlandish phone message and then sent it to thousands of Colorado residents. This group is comprised of former Clinton Administration officials and is funded in part by the extremely liberal billionaire, George Soros.

The intent of these calls was simply to sully my record on the issue of seaport security. You have most likely received similar calls distorting and lying about my record on many other issues over the past few months. This particular call, like the previous, was chalked full of inaccuracies. I believe it is necessary to clarify my record on port security.

The Congressional Record clearly shows I consistently support inspection technology improvements, additional funding and domestic control of seaport operations.

The recent message incorrectly stated that I voted against protecting

our nation's ports from terrorism. Nothing could be further from the truth. What this Washington-based liberal group does not want you to know is that I voted to pass the Homeland Security Appropriations Act for fiscal year 2006, which provides \$419.2 million in new funding to enhance port security activities, including the expansion of pre-screening cargo containers in high-risk areas. In addition, it includes:

- \$500 million in additional funding for the U.S. Coast Guard, an 8.6 percent increase, to develop, review and approve vessel and port security plans, improve underwater detection capabilities, and increase the intelligence program;

- \$101 million for the Container Security Initiative, which focuses on pre-screening cargo before it reaches our shores. This was an increase of \$25 million;

- and \$80 million for the next generation for cargo screening devices for our nation's ports of entry.

Referencing the proposed takeover of six American ports by a United Arab Emirates company, this recorded call astonishingly stated "Bush and his friends in Congress are outsourcing control of our nations strategic ports to a foreign company."

The billionaire-funded originators of this call on the East Coast obviously did not see recent local headlines such as "Musgrave breaks ranks on port deal" (Fort Collins Coloradoan, Feb. 22) and "Watch the rhetoric on seaport deal" (Coloradoan, Feb. 23), which clearly stated my objections to this port deal.

While I agree with the president on many issues, I strongly oppose the Bush administration's approval of this sale. That is why I co-sponsored H.R. 4807, a bill introduced by Chairman Peter King, R-NY, of the Homeland Security Committee. Specifically, this bill would:

- require the president to place a stay on DP World's take over;

- require the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States to commence an immediate 45-day investigation on the takeover's effects on national security;

- require the Secretaries of Homeland Security and the Treasury to prepare a full report and brief Members of Congress on their findings;

- and provide Congress the opportunity to disapprove the sale within 30 days.

The bottom line is these paid phone calls are a deliberate misrepresentation of the facts that are demonstrated in the Congressional Record. I look forward to working with my colleagues in Congress to evaluate the details of this agreement and more closely assess its potential risks. When it comes to national security, we should place the safety of American citizens at the top of our priorities.

On these important issues, I encourage debate and welcome inquiries on my voting record. For an accurate analysis of my record, please visit my official Web site at www.house.gov/musgrave.

Rep. Marilyn Musgrave represents Colorado's 4th Congressional District.



Musgrave