

INTEGRATING THE GULF OF MEXICO BORDER REGION

Honorable Katherine Harris, 13th District, Florida

Thank you, Mr. President.

I rise today to announce that on November 5, 2003, the Gulf of Mexico States Accord and its business counterpart, the Gulf of Mexico States Partnership, Inc. signed a Memorandum of Cooperation on Short Sea Shipping with the United States Maritime Administration of the US Department of Transportation. The Gulf of Mexico border states include my home state of Florida, in partnership with Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas, and the six Mexican Gulf states.

The signing ceremony took place at the MARAD Short Sea Shipping Conference, held in my District in Sarasota, Florida. This event was attended by over 200 maritime industry professionals from the United States, Mexico, Canada and the European Union. I ask my colleagues to recognize the outstanding work of the Maritime Administration, the Accord and the Partnership, and request that the English version of the agreement be inserted, with my comments, into the Congressional Record.

The MOC -- the first such agreement in the Gulf of Mexico -- calls for information exchange, technical assistance and collaboration among the three entities on issues related to development of short sea shipping in the Gulf. The MOC is a significant step toward full US-Mexico collaboration on short sea shipping in the Gulf of Mexico.

As the NAFTA passes its tenth year, there needs to be a new regional emphasis on the Gulf of Mexico border states. The initiatives described below will focus attention and leverage resources to develop this "water border", actions that will bolster homeland security, spur trade expansion, relieve transportation bottlenecks and reduce pollution through increased use of the Gulf's ports and intermodal infrastructure.

The Memorandum of Cooperation also calls for support of the "Gulf of Mexico Trade Corridor Transportation Study", which is being spearheaded by the business Partnership in collaboration with the Accord and its Working Group on Transportation, Infrastructure and Communications. The study's premise is as follows: Development of the Gulf of Mexico border, with its 62 million inhabitants in 11 US and Mexican states, will have immediate and enduring regional impact on efficient investment in homeland security, identification of and investment in "critical" physical infrastructure, tourism and educational development, environmental sustainability, and overall community and international economic development.

The Gulf of Mexico basin is a natural North American economic sub-region, which represents a seaborne NAFTA "superhighway" trade corridor, a common sustainable resource for tourism, agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture, and a common homeland security zone – from more secure shipping routes, regional tourism & significant petroleum reserves. The Gulf represents the ideal location for deepening and broadening the benefits of the NAFTA in preparation for the new flows of two-way trade that I

believe will occur under the Free Trade Area of the Americas amongst all of our neighbors in the Western Hemisphere.

MEMORANDUM OF COOPERATION
AMONG THE
MARITIME ADMINISTRATION OF THE UNITED STATES, THE
GULF OF MEXICO STATES ACCORD, AND
THE GULF OF MEXICO STATES PARTNERSHIP, INC.

1. PARTIES:

- a. The party to this agreement representing the Maritime Administration (MARAD), is the Maritime Administrator or his designated representative.
- b. The party to this agreement representing the Gulf of Mexico States Accord (GOMSA) will be the President of the Accord or his designated representative. GOMSA is a forum that was created to foster, promote and implement cooperative relationships between and for the eleven U.S. and Mexican border states that adjoin the Gulf of Mexico.
- c. The party to this agreement representing the Gulf of Mexico States Partnership, Inc. (the Partnership) will be the President of the organization or his designated representative. The Partnership is a non-profit private sector Gulf States group that shares the GOMSA goal of fostering and promoting interests of the member states and region.

2. PURPOSE:

- a. The purpose of this agreement is to recognize and enhance the communications and working relationship among MARAD, GOMSA, and the Partnership in order to address the common goals of advancing short sea shipping in the Gulf of Mexico and ensure that it is safe, secure, efficient and environmentally sound.
- b. The agreement serves to facilitate periodic meetings among MARAD, GOMSA and the Partnership to identify ways the respective organizations can assist in the sharing of short sea shipping policy, experience and related information.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

- a. MARAD will share with GOMSA and Partnership MARAD's short sea shipping
 - i. goals, policies, and experience so as to allow these organizations to use their extensive
 - ii. state and business networks to improve maritime efficiency, commercial viability, and
 - iii. short sea shipping opportunities as they arise.

- b. GOMSA and the Partnership will share information and experience with MARAD so that they can assist in the accomplishment of MARAD objectives to ease traffic congestion, improve transportation safety, and elevate the quality of life in the Gulf States region through cooperative short sea shipping efforts.
- c. MARAD, GOMSA and the Partnership will consult and share information in support of a "Gulf of Mexico Trade Corridor Transportation Study", a long-range Partnership project to highlight new commercial opportunities, inventory Gulf of Mexico infrastructure assets, and to identify and assess gaps in existing transportation infrastructure.
- d. This agreement is effective upon the signature of the parties. It is informal in nature and may be modified by mutual agreement or terminated by any party at any time. The parties pledge to act in good faith at all times and to use their best efforts to accomplish the purposes summarized herein. This partnership does not obligate MARAD to expend any funds.

Signed the 5th day of November 2003 in triplicate, in Sarasota, Florida in the English and Spanish languages, each version being equally valid.

[Capt. William Schubert, Administrator, for the US Maritime Administration]
[Gary L. Springer, Secretary-General, Gulf of Mexico States Accord]
[Robert Hendry, Director, Gulf of Mexico States Partnership, Inc.]