

Oakland Tribune My Word: Port of Oakland vitally important to economic recovery

By Francisco J. Sanchez

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EARLIER THIS WEEK, I joined several members of Oakland's business community to announce a partnership between the U.S. Department of Commerce's International Trade Administration (ITA) and the American Association of Port Authorities (AAPA), designed to help local small and medium-sized enterprises in seaport communities take advantage of new opportunities to grow and expand via exports.

The startling reality is that America's seaports carry more U.S. merchandise abroad than air cargo, trucks, railroads and pipelines combined.

The opportunities for business growth and job creation are rich, and the time for businesses to take a more global perspective is now.

This new partnership with AAPA will offer industry-led workshops, seminars and other events that provide potential exporters with a basic knowledge of export requirements.

It will also provide a unique opportunity for Oakland to join the Los Angeles port and others across the country to lead the charge on President Barack Obama's national export initiative, a national challenge to double U.S. exports by the end of 2014.

In addition to increasing the \$455 billion in exports that flowed through the veins of America's seaports in 2010, this soaring goal would support millions of jobs here at home.

According to a recent report, for every \$1 billion of goods and services we export, more than 5,000 U.S. jobs are created or supported, a percent of which are in the city of Oakland.

With the support and determination of everyday citizens, Oakland is poised to become a driving force for a new export economy.

As the primary port of export for Northern California and its agricultural industries, the Port of Oakland is the largest U.S. export port for wines. Oakland is also one of the few U.S. seaports whose exports exceed their imports; nearly 55 percent of Oakland's total cargo tonnage is export tonnage.

It is AAPA and ITA's goal to further build up these homegrown export businesses by introducing exporters to federal government resources and personnel for further assistance.

If you are considering exports, please take a minute to register at <http://export.gov/ports> to access federal resources to help you expand your business and reach vast new markets.

With our help, and the help of your local port, the growth of your business via exports is well within reach.

The economy during the past few years has been anything but easy, especially for hardworking port cities. America's export growth relies on our ability to focus and leverage all available export promotion resources to help U.S. companies succeed in the global marketplace.

By working together to do so, we can achieve the export growth, job creation, and national economic recovery and development goals that are at the heart of President Obama's national export initiative.

Leveraging partnerships is the key to success in creating the jobs of the future.

Francisco J. Sánchez is the under secretary of commerce for international trade. He leads the International Trade Administration, a federal agency that promotes U.S. businesses and competitiveness with commercial offices across the United States and the globe.