

## Rep. Gus Bilirakis is Seeking Answers from TSA after Pipeline Vandalism

WASHINGTON (14 Nov.) -- U.S.

Rep. Gus M. Bilirakis (R-Fla.), member of the House Committee on Homeland Security, on Wednesday questioned the head of Transportation Security Administration, Kip Hawley, about the security conditions and inspection of pipelines in the Tampa Bay area.

During questioning on the subject of the hearing, which was about reported TSA negligence in undermining airport security review, Bilirakis notified Hawley that he wants a prompt response from his Agency, which assists the U.S. Department of Transportation in the security of the nation's pipelines.

"I want to let you know that I am going to be contacting TSA about the security of these pipelines, especially in the Tampa Bay area, and the role that TSA is playing in their inspection and security," said Bilirakis, who will be sending an official letter to the Agency shortly. "I hope that you will direct the appropriate officials under your direction to take this matter very seriously and respond to my inquiry expeditiously."

Congressman Bilirakis's questioning follows an act of vandalism on Nov. 13 to a 30-mile-long anhydrous ammonia pipeline in Riverview, Fla. Three teenage boys had drilled a hole into the pipeline in an alleged search for money. The leak resulted in the release of a noxious chemical cloud and the evacuation of thousands of local residents.

Following the hearing, Bilirakis noted, "This ammonium pipeline leak should be a wake-up call about the vulnerabilities of our nation's pipeline infrastructure." He added, "Many of these pipelines, while crucial to industry, could be sitting ducks for a terrorist attack resulting in a catastrophe. Just look at how a simple act of vandalism by teenage boys affected so many people. Imagine how much damage and disruption a sophisticated and coordinated terrorist attack could cause."