



On Second Thought With Jerry Cook

New CBP chief creates new opportunities

As we dash through spring, I remain positive about the exciting developments in our trade realm, in particular the Customs community. The U.S. Senate

confirmation of Customs and Border Protection Commissioner Gil Kerlikowske ushers in new opportunities to strengthen the public-private sector relationship and enhances the focus on executing trade more efficiently.

CBP has not had a permanent commissioner, along with the needed affirmations of defined leadership, in a long time. I believe Kerlikowske's experience and expertise will play an integral role in furthering CBP's goal of simultaneously securing the border and expediting the at-the-border trade process, vital to our exports and imports. Utilizing his enforcement background, the commissioner has taken the helm to rapidly focus on the trade facilitation and responsibilities and trade-centric side of Customs.

CBP demonstrates its partnership with business by predictable and efficient execution. The agency's knowledge and acumen on how Customs procedures affect the movement of goods, while protecting American citizens and securing our borders, is critical to the nation and our economy. Kerlikowske and Customs are working on initiatives that strengthen the focus on facilitating trade at the border and should continue to strike a balance between commercial realities and security.

First, Customs is leading the charge on automating the International Trade Data System (ITDS) and executing a plan to complete the Automated Commercial Environment (ACE). The completion of these systems will come in 2016 and was mandated by President Obama in an Executive Order released in February. The system streamlines the way U.S. executive departments and federal agencies interact with traders and simplify the flow of goods across borders. These initiatives will improve communications and electronic sharing of Customs documents across agencies. What

does this mean for the average American business? Paperwork will be reduced for those engaged in global markets and will help create new jobs at home and abroad for Americans.

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Kerlikowske also seems dedicated to continuing engagement and dialogue with the trade. Strengthening public-private partnerships will be vital to the success of his administration of the agency. Customs has many avenues in which it works with the trade including the Advisory Committee on Commercial Operations (COAC). This committee is comprised of 20 governmental officials as well as members of the business community and general public that advise the Treasury and Homeland Security departments on national security matters. The advisory committee meets quarterly and works on pertinent issues that affect both government and businesses. COAC's

efforts will help ensure CBP gets the assistance it needs from all members of the trade by giving technical knowledge, input and finding solutions to problems we can solve together. Going forward, it remains imperative CBP and the trade work together to keep that momentum going. A stronger public-private relationship will not only reinforce the importance of global custom procedures, but will usher in a new era at CBP that focuses on harmonizing movement of goods across borders while continuing to keep Americans safe.

Another opportunity where CBP can strike a balance between commercial trade and security and expand the focus on 21st century trade is through its Centers of Excellence and Expertise (CEEs). These centers were established to create more uniform practice across U.S. ports of entry, resolve trade compliance issues and bolster knowledge within the agency on industry practices. They virtually connect CBP personnel around the country by using new technologies and strategies to improve coordination between other agencies. Kerlikowske has already stated he will continue to support these centers, which I applaud. I think the centers are a great way for CBP to equip itself with the tools and industry expertise it needs to march into the new era of trade.

In closing, it is most important we say a big "thank you" to Thomas Winkowski for his years of great service, leadership, mentoring and partnering, as well as his leadership as acting CBP commissioner. Through his leadership, CBP continued to excel and meet the various challenges during the two-week government shutdown in October 2013 by efficiently and swiftly moving goods across our borders while maintaining a high level of security and vigilance. With Kerlikowske now leading the charge, there is even more opportunity for CBP to continue making improvements.

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