

Greater Houston Port Bureau

# Port Bureau News

Quarter Two / 2025



## Port of Galveston 200th Anniversary

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Port Watch | Too Much Information -The Surprising Cause of "Panic Buying" |  
West Coast Ports Eye Consumer Demand Weakened by 'Whipsaw' News Effect |  
Captain Nicole Rodriguez Assumes Command of Sector Houston-Galveston, U.S. Coast Guard |



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About the Cover

The Port of Galveston is the oldest port in the Gulf of Mexico west of New Orleans and is celebrating it's 200th anniversary this year. Read more on page 22.



The backbone of our nation's critical infrastructure—maritime ports, oil and gas facilities, chemical terminals, vessels, tugs, telecommunications networks, and physical security systems—relies heavily on operational technology. These systems, which control everything, are the lifeblood of our economy and security. As we integrate increasingly technologies into these vital sectors, a growing concern emerges: the risks posed by foreign-manufactured components embedded within these systems. See page 6.

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Captain’s Corner

Our Port Region Amid Tariffs, Storms, and Global Growth



The Houston port region continues to serve as a cornerstone of U.S. maritime commerce, supported by its strategic location, expansive petrochemical infrastructure, and visionary leadership. Earlier this year, the Economic Alliance Houston Port Region led a delegation to Washington, D.C., where we had the opportunity to advocate for our region’s priorities and emphasize its critical role in the national economy. Over the course of two days, we conducted more than 30 meetings with federal officials, and it was an impactful effort to ensure our elected representatives are informed and engaged. As we look toward the second half of 2025, three key issues remain central to our advocacy on behalf of the Houston Ship Channel and its facilities: the evolving impacts of U.S. tariff policies, the urgent need for hurricane preparedness, and the growing international significance of the Houston port region in global trade.

Tariff Policies and the Gulf’s Strategic Resilience

As global trade tensions continue, U.S. tariff policy remains a powerful force influencing supply chains across the nation. The recent adjustments, particularly increased tariffs on key industrial components from China and select countries, are already being felt by U.S. manufacturers and some petrochemical exporters. These changes have the possibility of rising costs, increased supply delays, and maybe the need to reroute certain cargoes through alternative ports or suppliers.

While some sectors have been buffered by strategic trade agreements, the broader effect on the Houston Ship Channel is clear: flexibility and adaptability are paramount. Despite these challenges, our port region’s status as a first-in-class port for waterborne tonnage allows it to weather these disruptions better than most. Investments in digital supply chain visibility and expanded intermodal connectivity continue to provide options, making us not just a port of call, but a port of confidence.

2025 Hurricane Season: Preparing for the Worst, Protecting the Best

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (“NOAA”) has forecasted an “above-normal” 2025 hurricane season, citing record-high Gulf water temperatures and evolving climate patterns. For a port region as critical and vulnerable as Houston, this means preparation is not optional; it is essential.

Port stakeholders are doubling down on resilience planning. From flood mitigation projects and hardened terminal infrastructure to emergency communication protocols and backup power systems, lessons from Hurricanes Harvey, Ike, and Beryl are informing a new generation of defensive strategies. In my case, when working with our port partners,

I put on my Coast Guard hat and apply all the lessons I learned during my 26-year career. The key to our success is to ensure public and private partners are working collaboratively to guarantee that operations can be restored quickly if disaster strikes. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers continues to advance storm surge protection initiatives, while terminal operators are integrating risk simulations and scenario planning into their daily operations. As we know, any day the port is closed to commercial vessels, it comes with a price tag of almost \$3 billion in economic activity!

Global Spotlight: Houston's Rising Role in International Trade

Recent years have seen a notable increase in foreign interest in Houston’s port-related logistics and manufacturing sectors. With several new investment announcements and international trade missions in 2024 and early 2025, the region is gaining momentum as a global business destination

A combination of factors drives this growth: the U.S. Gulf’s energy dominance, Houston’s multimodal capabilities, and the regional



workforce’s strength. Delegations from Europe, Asia, and Latin America have increasingly made Houston a top destination for trade missions, port tours, and investment discussions. I continue to work closely with our friends from Panama and just recently provided a lecture at the Rice Executive forum to representatives from the port of Veracruz. Partnerships with Latin American ports are expanding, creating new cross-Gulf routes that position Houston as a trade bridge.

As 2025 unfolds, our maritime sector finds itself at a pivotal intersection, facing external pressures from tariffs, internal demands for resiliency, and unprecedented global attention. How we navigate these currents will define our region’s legacy and future. The team at the Greater Houston Port Bureau, alongside our members and partners, will remain committed to advancing strategies that keep our region competitive, protected, and globally connected.



#myportcommunityisbetterthanyours

CAPT Eric Carrero,  
USCG (Ret.)  
GHPB President



# June 1 Was the Start of Hurricane Season. Now is the Time to Prepare!

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (“NOAA”) forecasted in May for above-normal hurricane activity in the Atlantic basin this year. The season from June 1 to November 30, is predicted for a 30% chance of a near-normal season, a 60% chance of an above-normal season, and a 10% chance of a below-normal season. The forecast range of 13 to 19 total named storms (winds of 39 mph or higher). Of those, 6-10 are forecast to become hurricanes (winds of 74 mph or higher), including 3-5 major hurricanes (category 3, 4 or 5; with winds of 111 mph or higher). NOAA has a 70% confidence in these ranges.



## Why is the season expected to be above normal?

The above normal forecast is due to a combination of factors that include continued ENSO-neutral conditions, (El Niño and La Niña, the natural climate pattern collectively known as ENSO) warmer than average ocean temperatures, forecasts for weak wind shear, and the potential for higher activity from the West African Monsoon, a primary starting point for Atlantic hurricanes. All of these elements favor tropical storm formation.

The high activity era continues in the Atlantic Basin, featuring high-heat content in the ocean and reduced trade winds. The higher-heat content provides more energy to fuel storm development, while weaker winds allow the storms to develop without disruption. This hurricane season also has the potential for a northward shift of the West African monsoon, producing tropical waves that seed some of the strongest and most long-lived Atlantic storms.

## What’s in a name: Hurricanes, Cyclones and Typhoons

Meteorologists use the term “tropical cyclone” to describe storms around the world, but they are also referred to by a variety of regional names based on where they form.

- **Hurricanes:** North Atlantic and the eastern/central North Pacific oceans. It is extremely rare for one to form in the South Atlantic Ocean.
- **Cyclones:** western South Pacific and Indian oceans
- **Typhoons:** western North Pacific (around the Philippines, Japan, and China)



### Hurricanes

The term "hurricane" came from the Caribbean, where the indigenous Taíno people of the Greater Antilles worshiped a storm deity named Juracán. This god’s name may have come from the Mayan god of wind, Huracán. Spanish explorers later adopted the words "huracán" and “furacán” to describe these intense storms and brought them to Europe. The word eventually came into the English language as European colonial powers expanded their territories and encountered these powerful storms in the Atlantic basin.

### Cyclones

The word "cyclone" originated in ancient Greek, though sources disagree on exactly which term and is likely derived from either kúklos, “circle, wheel” or kuklóō, “go around in a circle, form a circle, encircle describing the spiraling nature of the storms. However, "cyclone" was

a term used to describe any system characterized by circular motion, including tornadoes and whirlpools.

### Typhoons

The word "typhoon" does not have a clear an origin. It might have a Greek basis due to European influence, coming from the Greek word, Typhôn, who was a dangerous mythological monster associated with the power of the winds. Or the word may have had some influence on the Persian word, tūfān, which means “to roar or blow furiously.” Portuguese sailors traveling through this part of the world also brought back the word tufão. This comes from a root that is based in both Urdu and Hindi—tūfān—which may in turn be derived from an even older Chinese word, tai fung, meaning “great wind.” This word has since evolved to become dà fēng in modern Mandarin Chinese, and taifū in modern Japanese.

Since 1953, Atlantic tropical storms had been named from lists originated by the National Hurricane Center. They are now maintained and updated through a strict procedure by an international committee of the World Meteorological Organization, a specialized agency of the United Nations.

There are six lists that are used in rotation and re-cycled every six years, i.e., the 2023 list will be used again in 2029. The only time that there is a change in the list is if a storm is so deadly or costly that the future use of its name for a different storm would be inappropriate for reasons of sensitivity. If that occurs, then at an annual meeting by the WMO committee (called primarily to discuss many other issues) the offending name is stricken from the list and another name is selected to replace it. Several names have been retired since the lists were created.

2025 Atlantic Tropical Cyclone Names		
Andrea	Humberto	Olga
Barry	Imelda	Priddy
Chantal	Jerry	Roberto
Dexter	Karen	Sebastian
Erin	Lorenzo	Tanya
Fernand	Melissa	Van
Gabriel	Nestor	Wendy

## Prepare Now, Don’t Wait!

If you live in the Gulf Coast, hurricanes are a part of life and having a plan in place will save you and your family a lot of aggravation and even lives.

The National Hurricane Center classifies hurricanes to their potential for producing damage on a scale of 1 to 5. Damage caused by a hurricane falls into 3 categories and is a result of one or a combination of “storm surge”, damaging winds, and excessive rainfall. “Storm surge”, which is defined as an abnormal rise of sea water generated by a storm, over and above the predicted astronomical tides. This surge of water can exceed 20 feet in height depending upon the strength of the hurricane and tide conditions. Storm surge and flash flooding from excessive rain have caused more deaths than hurricane winds. A storm surge is not to be confused with a tidal wave or tsunami. The surge is a large amount of sea water with heavy wave action on top of it and can last for several hours.

Type/Category	Winds (MPH)
Depression	>35
Tropical Storm	39-73
Hurricane 1	74-95
Hurricane 2	96-110
Hurricane 3	111-130
Hurricane 4	131-155
Hurricane 5	>155

Hurricane Classifications

In a deep ocean, this huge dome of water sinks and flows away, but as the storm nears land the rising sea floor blocks the water’s escape and comes ashore as a deadly flood. During high tide, the storm surge will be even deeper and more extensive.

## Planning Ahead-TIPS

### Before the Storm

- Keep your vehicles fueled during hurricane season. Always have at least a half tank, and when a storm begins to threaten the Gulf, top your vehicles off to avoid local exhausted fuel supplies.
- Prepare your home before hurricane season. The time to purchase lumber and cut and fit boards is before the necessary supplies are depleted from local home improvement stores.
- Purchase and store your supplies (bottled water, non-perishable food, etc.) before the season begins.
- Review your insurance coverage before the season begins. Ensure nothing has changed, and you are covered for damage associated with hurricanes. Review your requirement for wind and flood coverage. Most flood policies have a 30-day waiting period before kicking in so don't wait for an approaching storm before deciding to buy coverage.
- Complete a property inventory before the season begins. Use a video camera and keep the tape or digital file in a safe location. Ensure you have appraisals for antiques and special items.
- Survival Kit
  - Kids activity kit-books, paper/crayons, favorite toy, pillow, etc.
  - Pet kit-vaccination papers, leash/collar, pet food, medications, litter/pan
  - Food-3-day supply of non-perishable food without needing refrigeration. Items needed for cooking, eating and cleaning
  - Sanitary & Hygiene Needs-detergent, soap, paper towels/toilet paper, plastic garbage bags, etc.
  - Communications, Lights, and Safety-Battery operated radio, cell phone/charger/battery, flashlights with extra batteries, waterproof matches/lighter
  - Water-One gallon of water for each person per day plus for pets
  - First Aid and Medical Supplies-first aid kit, prescription medications, etc.

### Family Notification and Communication

- Designate someone outside the affected area as a central point of contact. Everyone in the family, wherever they are, must use the contact number to relay their condition, whereabouts, and personal messages.
- Everyone must memorize that number. For infants, toddlers, or special needs children, write the number visibly on what they are wearing.
- Teach everyone that will be using this number how to place a phone call without money (collect, phone card, etc.).
- In the event that you are separated from one another, have a regrouping location that is known to everyone.

### Stay Updated/Evacuate

In advance of Hurricane Season, identify several hotels within the designated area (located well inland and away from potential storm impacts) that meet the needs of you and your family, or in an area familiar to your family. Stay informed by local radio and TV broadcasts. Additional information and alert information can be found below. Stay safe.

### For more information and resources

Harris County

- [www.readyharris.org](http://www.readyharris.org)
- [www.weather.gov/hgx](http://www.weather.gov/hgx)
- [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov)

Texas Emergency Management

- [www.tdem.texas.gov](http://www.tdem.texas.gov)

NOAA

- National Weather Service: [www.weather.gov](http://www.weather.gov)
- Live Hurricane Tracker: <https://www.nesdis.noaa.gov/imagery/hurricanes/live-hurricane-tracker>



# Unseen Threats: The Hidden Risks of Foreign Components in Critical Infrastructure



In an era of unprecedented connectivity, the backbone of our nation’s critical infrastructure—maritime ports, oil and gas facilities, chemical terminals, vessels, tugs, telecommunications networks, and physical security systems—relies heavily on operational technology ("OT"). These systems, which control everything from cargo cranes to pipeline valves, are the lifeblood of our economy and security. Yet, as we integrate increasingly sophisticated technologies into these vital sectors, a growing concern emerges: the risks posed by foreign-manufactured components embedded within these systems. As an ISA Fellow, president of InfraGard Houston, and someone who has spent decades navigating the intersection of infrastructure and communications, Marco Ayala has seen firsthand how our reliance on global supply chains can expose us to vulnerabilities that adversaries may exploit.

## The Growing Dependency on Foreign Components

The global supply chain for OT is a complex web, with components often sourced from multiple countries to optimize cost and efficiency. In maritime ports, for instance, automated ship-to-shore cranes, manufactured by foreign entities like China’s Shanghai Zhenhua Heavy Industries ("ZPMC"), dominate many U.S. facilities. Similarly, in the oil and gas and chemical sectors, sensors, controllers, and networking equipment often originate from overseas suppliers. Telecommunications infrastructure, including 5G equipment, and physical security systems like surveillance cameras frequently incorporate components from countries identified as potential adversaries, such as China. A 2024 U.S. Maritime Advisory highlighted vulnerabilities in port equipment, noting that foreign-manufactured systems like ZPMC cranes and Nuctech scanners create risks to both IT and OT networks, potentially allowing unauthorized access to sensitive logistics data.

This dependency is not merely a matter of economics—it’s a national security issue. Many of these components are designed, manufactured, or maintained by companies with ties to foreign governments, raising concerns about embedded backdoors, firmware vulnerabilities, or remote command-and-control capabilities. The 2025 Office of the Director of National Intelligence Threat Assessment underscored that adversaries like China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea are actively targeting U.S. critical infrastructure, including telecommunications and manufacturing sectors, to steal data or disrupt operations.

## The Risks: From Espionage to Disruption

The risks of foreign components in OT systems are multifaceted. First, there’s the threat of espionage. Systems like the People Republic of China’s ("PRC") LOGINK platform, used in at least 24 global ports, aggregate sensitive data such as vessel and cargo details, which could be accessed by foreign governments. The U.S. government has explicitly prohibited LOGINK’s use in American ports due to its potential to collect and transmit sensitive logistics data to the PRC. Such data could reveal supply chain dependencies, military logistics patterns, or economic activities, providing adversaries with strategic insights.

Beyond espionage, the more alarming risk is disruption. Foreign components with embedded backdoors or remote access capabilities could allow adversaries to manipulate or disable critical systems. Imagine a scenario where a foreign-controlled crane in a major port like Los Angeles or Houston is remotely shut down, halting cargo operations during a crisis. In the oil and gas sector, a compromised controller in a pipeline could lead to catastrophic spills or explosions. The 2024 RAND commentary warned that Chinese hackers are pre-positioning themselves in U.S. infrastructure to “wreak havoc” in a potential conflict, citing FBI Director Christopher Wray’s testimony about the PRC’s Volt Typhoon group infiltrating critical networks.

Telecommunications and physical security systems are equally vulnerable. The 2024 ban on Chinese-made connected vehicles and components, proposed by the Commerce Department, highlighted fears that adversaries could remotely control or disable vehicles, potentially causing crashes or blocking key infrastructure like roads. Surveillance cameras, such as those produced by Hikvision and Dahua—both PRC-based companies banned in some U.S. applications—have been found to contain vulnerabilities that could allow remote access or data exfiltration. These risks are not hypothetical; they are actively being exploited.

## Real-World Examples of Compromise

Recent incidents underscore the tangible dangers of foreign components in U.S. infrastructure. In early 2024, U.S. authorities discovered that Chinese-made ZPMC cranes at several American ports contained cellular modems not specified in their design. These modems, capable of remote communication, raised concerns about potential command-and-control capabilities by the PRC. While investigations are ongoing, the presence of undocumented hardware in critical infrastructure is a stark reminder of the risks of unvetted foreign technology.

Another alarming case involved the PRC’s Volt Typhoon hacking group, which in 2024 was found to have infiltrated U.S. critical infrastructure networks, including those in the energy and telecommunications sectors. The group exploited vulnerabilities in foreign-manufactured networking equipment, embedding backdoors for potential disruption during a conflict. The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency ("CISA") and FBI issued warnings about Volt Typhoon’s ability to maintain persistent access, highlighting the need for robust supply chain scrutiny.

## The Supply Chain Challenge

The complexity of global supply chains exacerbates these risks. A single OT system may contain thousands of components—microchips, sensors, firmware—sourced from dozens of countries. Even when the primary manufacturer is domestic, subcomponents may originate from adversarial nations. The 2024 White House Critical and Emerging Technologies List emphasized the importance of securing supply chains for technologies like positioning, navigation, and timing systems, which are integral to maritime and telecommunications infrastructure. Yet, verifying the integrity of every component is a daunting task, particularly when manufacturers lack transparency or are subject to foreign government influence.

Compounding this challenge is the lack of domestic manufacturing capacity for many critical components. The U.S. has taken steps to bolster semiconductor production through initiatives like the CHIPS Act, but rebuilding a resilient supply chain will take years. In the interim, infrastructure operators must rely on rigorous vetting, cybersecurity hygiene, and partnerships to mitigate risks.



Mitigating the Threat

Addressing the risks of foreign components requires a multi-pronged approach. First, infrastructure operators must prioritize supply chain transparency. This means demanding detailed bills of materials from vendors and conducting independent audits of hardware and software. The U.S. Maritime Advisory recommends improving network segmentation, using secure file transfer protocols, and maintaining recoverable backups to reduce vulnerabilities in port systems. Similar measures should be applied across oil and gas, chemical, and telecommunications sectors.

Second, collaboration is critical. Partnerships with government agencies, national labs, and organizations like InfraGard Houston can provide access to threat intelligence and best practices. The Department of Homeland Security’s CISA International Strategic Plan for 2025–2026 emphasizes collective defense and information sharing to counter global threats. Academic institutions and private-sector cybersecurity firms, such as those involved in the DoD’s IDEAS program, can also drive innovation in secure OT solutions.

Finally, policy interventions are essential. Legislation like the Protecting Americans’ Data from Foreign Adversaries Act of 2024 and executive orders restricting data transfers to countries of concern signal a growing recognition of these threats. Expanding these measures to cover OT components could further safeguard critical infrastructure.

Looking Forward: A Call for Vigilance and Collaboration

As we navigate the complexities of globalized technology, the path forward demands a relentless commitment to understanding the

equipment and systems we deploy. Every component, from a crane’s firmware to a pipeline’s sensor, must be scrutinized for potential vulnerabilities. This is not a task for industry alone—it requires a united front. By partnering with our National Labs, organizations like MITRE, and collaborative networks like InfraGard Houston, we can develop robust strategies to assess and secure OT before it reaches our ports, refineries, or telecommunications networks. These partnerships foster innovation, share critical threat intelligence, and build resilience against adversaries who seek to exploit our interconnected world.

The stakes are high, but so is our capacity to respond. By embracing transparency, collaboration, and proactive policy, we can ensure that our critical infrastructure remains a pillar of strength, not a point of vulnerability. The future of our security depends on the choices we make today—choices that begin with knowing exactly what’s inside the systems that keep our nation running.

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Congratulations to GHPB Members of the Month



June

Gregory DeLong, Vice President-Marine Liaison, Enterprise Products Partners L.P.

With three decades of expertise in marine operations, Greg oversees the shipping operations that include cargo, shipping issues, and maritime facilities, enhancing safety in the Texas Gulf Coast. He also serves as the chairman of the Lone Star Harbor Safety Committee and is a member of the Port Bureau’s Efficiency and Advocacy Committees. As a past Coast Guard officer, Greg ensured regulatory compliance for marine facilities across Houston, Galveston, Texas City, and Freeport.



May

Lance Nunez, Global Bulk Marine Director at Dow Inc.

Lance has been instrumental in leading our Port Efficiency Committee and has identified processes that can save time and costs when moving vessels in the port. He continues to lead the team bringing stakeholders together to make this port the most efficient in the nation.



April

Bob Blades is president of Blades International, Inc.

Bob began his career in 1979 as a Foreign Exchange Intern with Texas Commerce Bank - Houston, where he remained throughout a career dedicated to International Banking. He has supported and contributed to the Greater Houston Port Community and served as a Board Member for over 40 years at the Port Bureau.

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# Roger Guenther Named as Greater Houston Port Bureau's 2025 Maritime Leader of the Year



The Greater Houston Port Bureau ("Port Bureau") is pleased to announce that Roger Guenther, retired executive director of Port Houston, has been named the 2025 Maritime Leader of the Year. Guenther will be honored at the Port Bureau's Annual Maritime Dinner on August 23, 2025. The Port Bureau Board of Directors named Guenther as the 2025 honoree for his leadership and commitment to the port region.

Guenther joined Port Houston in 1988, serving as executive director from 2014 until he retired in 2024. Prior to this, he served as deputy executive director of operations and was responsible for all container and breakbulk cargo operations, management and construction of capital development projects, facility and asset maintenance, and real estate interests. Guenther was appointed by Governor Gregg Abbott to the board of the Gulf Coast Protection District and continues to support the maritime industry in this role.

"We recognize Roger Guenther as the Greater Houston Port Bureau's 2025 Maritime Leader of the Year. For over 35 years, he demonstrated an unwavering commitment to the growth and success of our maritime industry and made a profound impact on the port of Houston and beyond," said Vincent DiCosimo, chairman of the Greater Houston Port Bureau. "His remarkable contributions to Project 11 - the expansion of the Houston Ship Channel - ensured that our region remains a global leader in trade and commerce."

In May 2022, Guenther was also inducted into the International Maritime Hall of Fame by the Maritime Association of the Port of New York and New Jersey for his leadership and dedication to advancing the industry through innovation and determination. He was also appointed to the Maritime Transportation System National Advisory Committee by Secretary of Transportation, Pete Buttigieg, and has also served on numerous other boards and committees,

including the Texas Department of Transportation's Texas Freight Advisory Committee, the Greater Houston Port Bureau, and more.

"I am humbled and honored to receive this award. As a former board member of the Port Bureau, I know how much the Maritime Dinner means to the maritime community, and I am excited to be a part of it," said Guenther.

The Houston Ship Channel is the nation's busiest waterway. Collectively, the more than 200 private and public terminals along the 52-mile channel make the area the nation's largest port for waterborne tonnage. The Channel supports 1.54 million jobs in Texas and 3.37 million jobs nationwide, and economic activity totaling \$439 billion in Texas - nearly 20 percent of Texas' total gross domestic product (GDP) - and \$906 billion in economic impact across the nation.

Over 800 maritime, transportation, and industry professionals and their guests attend the Annual Maritime Dinner to recognize maritime leaders or companies that have exhibited outstanding leadership and support for the port region. Recent honorees include Jürgen Schröder, founder of Schröder Marine Services, Inc., David Grzebinski, CEO of Kirby Marine Services, Port Houston Commission Chairman Ric Campo, and Jim Teague, Co-CEO of Enterprise Products Partners L.P.

The Annual Maritime Dinner is supported by Queen of the Fleet sponsors Buffalo Marine, Callen Marine, Enterprise Products Partners L.P., Kinder Morgan, Kirby Corporation, Port Houston, Targa Resources, and Vopak. Proceeds from the Annual Maritime Dinner support the Port Bureau's regional maritime advocacy efforts. Table and sponsorship opportunities and additional information are available online at [www.txgulf.org/annual-dinner](http://www.txgulf.org/annual-dinner) or call 713-678-4300.

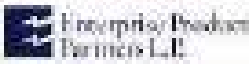


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Children's Museum of Houston  
Houston Museum of Natural Science  
Lake Travis Zipline Adventures

GOLD

Mexina Hoff Winery  
New Orleans Steamboat Co.  
Taste of Texas  
William Chris Winery Company



# Port Watch

## Golden Gate’s Barbary Coast



Photo: Sketched & drawn by C.R. Parsons. Published by Currier and Ives. - United States Library of Congress's Prints and Photographs division under the digital ID ppsmca.08933

The captain of the sailing ship *Loch Err* was shocked when several small boats fastened themselves to his vessel’s stern as it sailed into San Francisco Bay in September 1870. He had heard of the rumors about the port that bore the sobriquet “Barbary Coast.” A port where no seafarer was safe from the predations of the “Runners,” “Crimps” and nefarious waterfront boarding houses. Yet, he never fathomed a brazen, Piratesque assault.

The Runners leapt from their boats and clambered over the *Loch Err*’s rails. The captain’s demands that the Runners disembark were met with pointed revolvers; whereupon the captain protested no more. That annoyance aside, the Runners set to work. They effortlessly took to the rigging and cajoled the sailors to partake in the endless pleasures of the boarding house for whom they were working. Liquor was offered, photos of scantily clad ladies displayed and promises of more pay on a better sailing ship to entice them to abandon their posts. Eventually, the most determined of sailor’s resolve was weakened by the Spanish fly-laced booze or the Runner’s brass knuckles and slung shot. In a matter of hours, both passengers and captain were dumbfounded to gaze upon empty decks while the Runners rowed their unsuspecting victims ashore.

Unfortunately, once the Runners handed their seafaring prey to the Crimps at the boarding houses, the Shanghai process would unfold. Fearsome and ruthless “Shanghaiers” who ran the boarding houses were renown throughout the Barbary Coast. The likes of Horseshoe Brown, Calico Jim, George Ruben, Mother Bronson and the most notorious of them all – Shanghai Kelly – would quickly ensnare the unwitting sailors and confiscate any belongings in their possession. Whether the mariner was drugged, bludgeoned, or drunkenly seduced, he would invariably emerge from his comatose state on another ship sailing for parts unknown.

In some quarters of the maritime world, there appears to be much unknown. Will tariffs rise dramatically? Are there enough non-Chinese

built vessels to transport LNG? Does a recession loom or a trade war lurk? If one were to look upon Texas’s more remote port in Brownsville, there is no hint of trade malaise. The border port posted a rather impressive 24% monthly arrival gain and remains 9% ahead of last year’s vessel tally. On a year-to-date basis, general cargo is outpacing 2024’s numbers by 88%. This more than offset the 3% year-over-year wane for Bulker traffic which typically comprises well over 50% of all arrivals.

Embarking to the northeast, the port of Corpus Christi’s 6% monthly decline in arrivals prevented the port from entering positive territory for the year. Tellingly, its dominant constituent – Tankers – are up 5%. On the other hand, the Chemical Tanker count – the port’s second highest vessel type - lags last year’s by 6%. Nonetheless, both LNG and LPG port calls are up by 17% and 6% respectively year-to-date. Given the positive export numbers for energy constituents, the state of trade is somewhat sanguine save the fact that Bulklers have seen a precipitous decline of 40%. More importantly, the port’s recent completion of a deeper and wider channel will permit larger vessels to transport ever more tonnage.

Navigating along the same track line leads to the ever-dynamic port of Freeport. The May vessel arrival count exceeded the prior month by a paltry 1%; however, the year-to-date arrivals currently outdistance last’s year by 12% - a rather healthy gain. Its top three vessel categories – Chemical Tanker, LPG and LNG – are logging 8%, 8% and 29% year-over-year gains, respectively. Undoubtedly, American BTUs remain in high demand in the international marketplace. Car Carriers and Container ships have also contributed to 2025’s trade bounty as those two categories have seen 17% and 81% more arrivals. The only dark cloud in the energy realm for the port was the 19% decline in the number of tanker arrivals through the first 5 months of the year.

While chemicals and LNG are the backbone of the port of Freeport, the nearby port of Galveston handles more passengers than all of its Texas

brethren combined. 2025 has already exceeded the cruise ship count by 15%. Yet, there is only so much pier space in this former cotton capital. Thus, lay berth usage for chemical tankers has fallen 10% in the last year and 21% fewer Bulklers have moored at the port. Conversely, the tanker count continues to climb with the expansion of the port’s oil terminal. As such, May enjoyed a 20% monthly jump in tanker arrivals and 30% over the last year.

Just as Galveston develops additional cruise ship terminals, the adjacent port of Texas City is embarked upon the same mission on the energy front. Given that these undertakings take time, 2025’s arrival count remains in the wake of 2024’s, to the tune of 9%. All but one of the port’s vessel types were off for the month and remain down for the year. The sole exception being integrated tug and barge which climbed 15% above that of the prior year. That said, the tanker and chemical tanker vessel count has fallen over the year by 18% and 11%, respectively. Perhaps a harbinger of things to come?

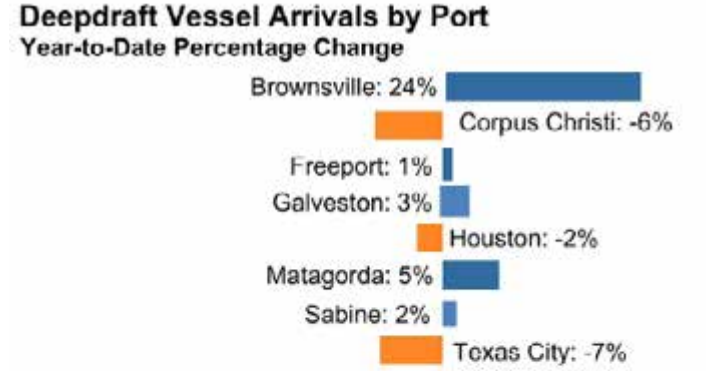
Then again, best to divine trends from a port with a larger sample base. The port of Sabine – the state’s second busiest port – would certainly qualify for that role. While last month’s total vessel count clicked up 2%, the overall numbers for the year have softened by 4%. Interestingly, in May, four of the five port’s top vessel categories posted their highest arrival counts for the year. Chemical tankers lead the pack with a 1% uptick year-to-date. LNG and LPG posted similar numbers; however, both categories chalked up negative numbers month over month – 6% and 21%, respectively. Tankers were also in a position to crow about May’s 11% monthly jump. Unfortunately, 2025’s performance is well behind that of 2024. It is down by 18%. Bulklers had a very torrid month with a 58% leap; however, they remain in the red with 11% fewer arrivals this year. Finally, more ocean-going integrated tows plied the waters of the Sabine-Neches river in May than any other month of the year. Alas, those 19% more callings failed to pull the category into positive territory for the year as reflected in the 13% year-to-date fall

The port of Houston did not fare as well, percentage-wise, as its petrochemical neighbor to the east in May but its year-to-date performance outmatched Sabine’s. Notwithstanding the tepid performance vis-à-vis 2024’s aggregate arrival count (i.e., 2% drop), there were a few noteworthy data points. Both Bulklers and Chemical Tankers put up their best monthly counts for the year resulting in a 19% and 10% rise over April. Chemical tankers fared slightly better year-over-year with a 4% climb compared to 3% for the Bulk carriers. On the opposite end of the spectrum, Tankers hit a nadir for the year with a 21% drop in arrivals over the last month. This pulled the category further into the red, year-over-year, with 9% fewer calls.

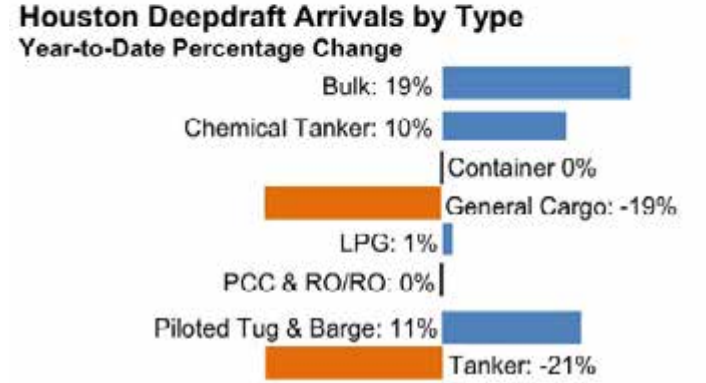
On another positive note, General Cargo activity has been quite robust as it outpaces last year’s arrivals by 15%. LPG squeaked out a paltry 1% monthly increase and remains even with last year’s count. The container vessel arrivals continue to drop. Thus far, they lag by 9% for the year. Yet, as one knows, fewer ships are carrying more containers. To date, the TEU statistics are 4% higher. What is somewhat telling is that the dramatic percentage increase in empty export containers which occurred last year has been eclipsed by a nearly 30% increase in empty import containers. Mind you, empty export TEUs still outpace empty imports by more than two to one.

The ocean-going tow activity enjoyed a healthy 11% jump over the last month. Accolade aside, its aggregate arrival numbers have fallen 14% compared to the first five months of 2024. On the inland pushboat front, the parade of tows navigating across the Houston Ship Channel also continues to creep downward.

At times, the Barbary Coast boarding houses lacked sailors to meet the demand from the ships anchored in the Bay. In the winter of 1875, three separate sailing vessels were in dire need of crews as they swung on their hooks outside the Golden Gate. Despite the absence of seafaring victims in his boarding house, the notorious Shanghai Kelly was determined



Source: Greater Houston Port Bureau's Marine Exchange of Texas



Source: Greater Houston Port Bureau's Marine Exchange of Texas

to profit from this dilemma. Thus, he chartered the *Goliah* – an old paddle wheeled steamer that had plied the bay for many years. Kelly then advertised throughout the waterfront that he would be hosting a birthday picnic aboard the *Goliah* featuring free liquor and other tempting attractions. His invitation to the Barbary Coast denizens attracted scores of miscreants and petty criminals.

At the appointed hour, the *Goliah* lowered her gangway for the eager picnickers. Once Shanghai Kelly counted 90 passengers, he and his henchman boarded the *Goliah*, cast off lines, and steamed for the waters beyond the Golden Gate. Kelly promptly rolled out barrels of beer and whiskey - liberally dosed with drugs - to the unsuspecting guests. Within two hours, after round upon round of toasts to their wily guest of honor, the 90 party goers were unconscious. At which point, Kelly directed the *Goliah* to pull alongside the awaiting ships and hastily transferred his drugged revelers onto their main decks. It did not matter that every Shanghaied victim had zero seafaring experience. The ships soon weighed anchor and sailed beyond the horizon.

To this day, no one knows if any of the drugged victims returned to San Francisco. Yet, the ever-increasing brazenness of the Crimps and Runners that prowled the waterfront demanded action. By the 1890s, Congress began to pass a series of laws to ensure sailors were paid the wages they earned and were protected from ruthless captains that encouraged the Shanghai culture. Eventually, on June 28, 1906, prompted by the horrors of the Barbary Coast, Congress voted “An Act To Prohibit Shanghaing In The United States” into law. Ironically, in April of that same year, the deadliest earthquake in the nation’s history completely destroyed the Barbary Coast and 80% of San Francisco. Undoubtedly, what the authorities could not prevent, an earthquake made short work of.

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# Too Much Information -The Surprising Cause of “Panic Buying”

In times of crisis, information overload can drive seemingly irrational stockpiling behavior — but calling it “panic buying” misses the bigger picture.



We live in an age of uncertainty — where global crises like pandemics, wars and natural disasters disrupt daily life. Yet, even in turbulent times, people must make choices about essentials — food, finances, health, shelter, etc. How do they determine the best course of action when the future is unclear?

## Key Findings:

- In times of uncertainty — whether during a pandemic, war, or environmental catastrophe — consumers seek information to guide their decisions, including whether to stockpile goods.
- Too many conflicting perspectives create “noise,” making it harder to determine the best course of action.
- Clearer, more consistent information helps consumers make decisions more efficiently.

Research by Amit Pazgal, Friedkin Professor of Management at Rice Business, and Yuanfang Lin (Associate Professor of Marketing, Lang Business School, University of Guelph) sheds light on how consumers update their beliefs and make purchasing decisions in uncertain environments.

Their study, published in the Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, suggests that stockpiling behaviors — like the rush for toilet paper at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic — may stem not from irrational panic but from rational responses to an overwhelming and often conflicting information landscape.

## More Information Means More Action — To a Point

During the early days of the pandemic, consumers faced an avalanche of news — some of it contradictory. They sought out information to make sense of the crisis, adjusting behaviors accordingly. As uncertainty loomed, many chose to act, whether by stockpiling supplies, seeking vaccination or reassessing financial plans.

As consumers gather more information, they are prone to take action. But at a certain point, the study shows, such benefits of gathering more information diminish, leading instead to a kind of decision-making paralysis.

“Mass uncertainty can lead to purchasing behavior that seems irrational,” says Pazgal. “At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, we saw people stockpiling toilet paper. Some people were buying twenty large bulk packs of toilet paper, without room to store it.”

At a glance, these purchases seem illogical. COVID-19 is a respiratory virus, and an abundance of toilet paper won’t do you much good if you are having trouble breathing. Many studies frame this behavior as “panic-buying,” but Pazgal and Lin argue otherwise.

## The Danger of Information “Noise”

Were people who stockpiled toilet paper in March 2020 reacting from lack of information?

On the contrary, the study reveals that people who gathered larger amount of information were actually more likely to engage in stockpiling early in the crisis. Instead of bringing clarity, too many conflicting perspectives created “noise,” making it harder for consumers to decide how to respond.

“Clear, consistent messaging across multiple platforms can help prevent unnecessary stockpiling,” says Pazgal. “When organizations provide clear, reliable information, they empower consumers to make smarter, more rational decisions.”

The study underscores a crucial insight: having access to multiple perspectives may seem beneficial, but when those perspectives conflict, consumers struggle to make confident decisions. Instead, more consistent and reliable messaging helps people act efficiently and rationally in high-stakes situations.

In other words, stockpiling toilet paper in the early days of COVID-19 was not an irrational response. Relatively little was known about the new virus, and much of the available information was contradictory. The researchers argue that consumers were doing the best they could with the information they had. Their decisions were driven by rational processing of the available information.

## From Stockpiling to Strategic Messaging

Pazgal’s research finds that greater consistency in the available information could have reduced the “noisiness” of a muddled media environment. When messaging is clear and consistent, it is easier to make sense of, and it helps people reach the right decision more quickly.

The study’s theoretical model, validated with consumer spending data and a survey of 303 participants in Canada and the U.S., found that as public health messaging became clearer in 2020, consumer behavior shifted. Participants were asked about their purchasing behavior and how they gathered information about COVID-19, including their use of social media, how often they visited official government websites, and how much they valued specific sources of information.

As their information acquisition became more consistent, they stopped hoarding supplies and began buying masks and hand sanitizer. This shift underscored the role of well-structured, consistent communication in guiding public behavior.

“Participants who relied on a wider range of sources were more likely to stockpile early in the pandemic,” Pazgal notes. “Paradoxically, their search for knowledge amplified uncertainty, leading them to make purchasing decisions based on perceived chaos rather than the actual situation.”

## The Importance of Information Consistency

“People make the best decisions they can with the information they have, but that information is not always enough,” Pazgal says. “To make the right decisions, people need to have the right information, and it needs to be consistent.”

Pazgal’s research provides insight into how government agencies and business organizations should communicate with the public during crises — whatever form they take.

“Clear, consistent messaging across multiple platforms can help prevent unnecessary stockpiling,” says Pazgal. “When organizations provide clear, reliable information, they empower consumers to make smarter, more rational decisions.”



Ty Burke





Photo: The Port of Los Angeles expects calmer waters in the coming months as throughput drops. Photo by Eric Watkins

# West Coast Ports Eye Consumer Demand Weakened by ‘Whipsaw’ News Effect

U.S. West Coast ports inevitably feel the impacts of consumer spending and this year is no exception. The difference this year, though, is the tariff-driven uncertainty that has caused a sharp rise in containerized cargo during the first quarter, but also a potentially sharp fall-off in through-put yet to come.

“We’ve been looking at record numbers just in general. Our year-to-date numbers for 2025 are running ahead of where we were last year by quite a bit,” says Mike Jacob, president of the Pacific Merchant Shipping Association (“PMSA”), which represents ocean carriers and marine terminal operators at ports along the West Coast.

The main container ports along the Pacific do indeed report generally higher figures for the first part of the year, but as Jacob notes, the key question among industry professionals in the region is “What comes next?” The answer has everything to do with consumers.

The Port of Los Angeles handled 842,806 twenty-foot equivalent units (“TEU”) in April, 9.4% more than last year. Over the first four months of the year, 3,346,853 TEU have crossed its dock, an uptick of 6.2% over the same period in 2024.

Port of Los Angeles Executive Director Gene Seroka attributed the positive numbers to a strong economy, high consumer confidence and the recent “push” by importers to bring cargo in ahead of today’s tariffs.

But that positive trend is not expected to last, Seroka said, noting that “moving forward – at least for the short term – we will see a softening of global trade during this period of elevated tariffs and uncertainty.”

That view was shared by Mario Cordero, chief executive at the neighboring Port of Long Beach, who noted that his facility is “now

anticipating a 10% drop-off in imports in May” after moving the most containerized cargo of any American port in the first quarter of the year.

“Soon, consumers could find fewer choices and higher prices on store shelves and the job market could see impacts, given the continuing uncertainty,” Cordero said.

Farther to the north in California, Port of Oakland Maritime Director Bryan Brandes said container volume remained stable during the first four months of 2025 but that “uncertainty and high tariffs impacted our China volume.”

Oakland handled 185,499 TEU in April, marking a 14.7% decrease in overall cargo volume from March 2025, a slowdown it said was “driven by market uncertainty as well as softening demand in exports — both influenced by recent shifts in U.S. trade policy.”

The news out of Washington state from the Northwest Seaport Alliance of Seattle and Tacoma was no less concerned about the sudden rises and falls in cargo throughput, which one official characterized as the “bullwhip” effect.

While March and April saw higher volumes year-over-year compared to 2024, a significant shift occurred in the second week of May 5 when, compared to the week before, the port saw a 30% drop in international import volumes and a 23% decline compared to the weekly average for the entire year.

“We understand that the public is anxious on the potential impacts of the tariffs and the rapid and unpredictable fluctuations and the major policy trade decisions happening at the White House,” said Toshiko Hasegawa, NWSA co-chair and president of the Port of Seattle Commission.



“We’re now up to about 57 different announcements since January alone,” Seroka said, adding that “even for the most seasoned professional in this business, it’s a lot to keep up with.”

The whipsaw of information also affects consumer sentiment, according to a survey by the University of Michigan, which it said had “ebbed at the preliminary reading for May but turned a corner in the latter half of the month following the temporary pause on some tariffs on China goods.”

The uptick of 52.2 due to the positive report was a bit higher than a preliminary reading of 50.8 that was released two weeks ago. But the new reading is still one of the lowest ever recorded by the Michigan survey, in data going back to 1952.

“Given that consumers generally expect tariffs to pass through to consumer prices, it is no surprise that trade policy has influenced consumers’ views of the economy,” the Michigan survey said.

David Seif, chief economist for developed markets at Nomura, told The Wall Street Journal that tariff worries are the “overwhelming reason” why sentiment is near a historic low. “These are extraordinary news cycles, and tariffs are just so in people’s faces,” he said.

As a result of the turmoil, U.S. consumers have grown increasingly cautious in their spending habits as their spending growth slowed from a month-over-month pace of 0.7% in March to 0.2% in April, according to a May 30 report by the Bureau of Economic Analysis.

At the moment, the predicting the future comes down to a matter of weighing the significance of two opposite sets of data: the hard data documenting the numbers from frontloading as companies stocked up ahead of tariffs, while the soft data appears to portend a collapse in demand as consumers anticipate tariff-driven price hikes.

Judging consumer demand is the name of the game when it comes to the supply chain industry, and right now it is anyone guess which way that demand will go in the coming months.

That is really the crux of the matter, according to PMSA’s Mike Jacob.

“We look at macro demand or how these trade lanes start impacting our ability to fill vessels and whether or not that justifies a string,” he says. “The real hard work is from the actual cargo owners and their customs brokers and freight forwarders.”

They are the ones, according to Jacob, “who have to actually try to calculate all this stuff, make real time decisions, and then make guesses about what their supply and demand is and their prices and all that stuff. I mean, that’s the hard part.”

How many containerized units will cross the docks of U.S. West Coast ports in the months to come? Much will depend on the frequency of news coming out of the nation’s capital, keeping in mind that whipsaw effect on that all-important consumer sentiment and spending.



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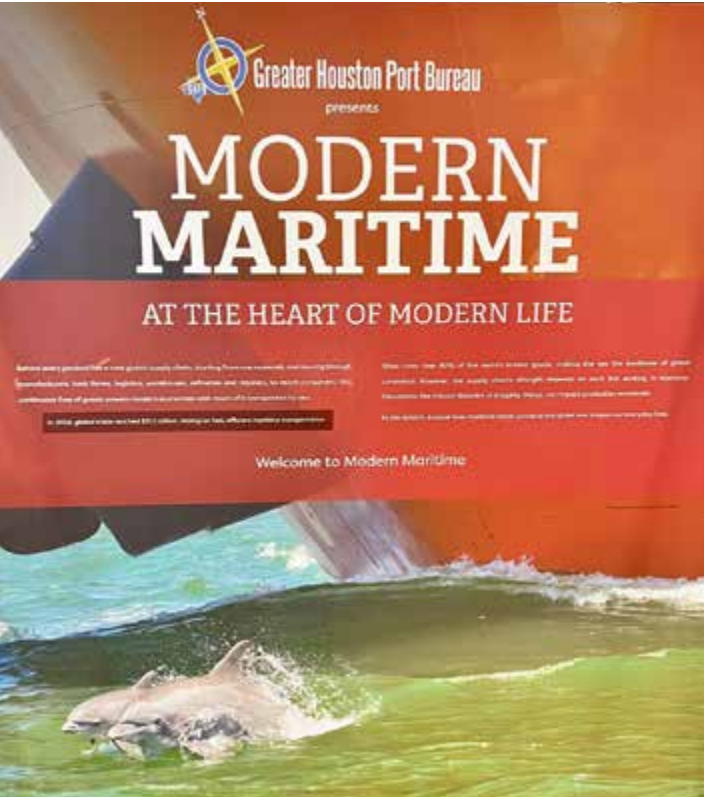
# Houston Maritime Center and Museum Grand Opening

In 2000, Houston Maritime Center & Museum (“HMCM”) was an extension of founder James “Jim” L. Manzolillo’s unique experiences, personality, and lifelong association with the ocean. As a naval architect, Manzolillo traveled extensively, collecting nautical artifacts from around the world. With a passion for maritime, Manzolillo channeled his resources to create a small museum engaging people of all ages on the history of sea exploration. In 2019, Houston Maritime Museum moved into a temporary East End location

On the banks of Buffalo Bayou in Houston’s East River Development, the new HMCM opened. Presenting history, arts, culture, and sciences through a maritime lens, the collection navigates a voyage through the nautical world with extensive exhibits, models, and artifacts, emphasizing interactive experiences bringing the collection to life with an emphasis on Texas. HMCM’s education platform promotes awareness beginning from early childhood: connecting the community with maritime past, present and future through STEAM principles targeting K-12.

In addition, HMCM connects the community to technology and modern industry, making history and education accessible to neighboring communities. Through programming events, lecture series, Family Days, and relevant programs and videos utilized for homeschooling, are produced in alliance with schools, colleges, universities, corporations, and maritime organizations.

For details and information go to: <https://houstonmaritime.org>.



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# Protecting America’s Critical Infrastructure: Who is Ultimately Responsible?



One of the most pressing questions facing our nation is who is truly responsible for protecting America’s critical infrastructure? Is it the government’s job alone? Should the private sector carry the weight? Or is the answer found in a dynamic, symbiotic partnership between the two? Let’s explore how our current infrastructure protection model was born from the aftermath of 9/11, how it has evolved over the past two decades, and where it must go to address the fast-moving, multidimensional threats that now confront our most essential systems. This issue is especially relevant to senior leaders in energy, maritime, and chemical industries—sectors that sit at the core of national resilience and economic security.

Since the tragic events of September 11, 2001, the U.S. government and private sector have invested billions of dollars to enhance the security of our nation and the critical infrastructure supporting the American way of life. One of the government’s first steps was the creation of the Department of Homeland Security (“DHS”) through the Homeland Security Act of 2002. This law consolidated 22 federal agencies into a single cabinet-level department, marking the largest U.S. government reorganization since the establishment of the Department of Defense in 1947.

Over the years, numerous policies and presidential directives have aimed to improve both internal coordination among federal agencies and external collaboration with the private sector. Among the most significant was Presidential Policy Directive 21 (“PPD-21”), issued by President Obama in 2013. PPD-21 was designed to strengthen the security and resilience of the United States’ critical infrastructure against all hazards—whether physical, cyber, natural, or man-made.

PPD-21 had several key goals: advancing a national unity of effort in protecting infrastructure, clarifying roles and responsibilities across DHS, Sector-Specific Agencies, and the private sector, improving information sharing to enhance situational awareness and threat response, and promoting resilience—not just protection. It was a modernized approach, aiming to ensure infrastructure could withstand, adapt to, and quickly recover from disruptions, while bridging the gap between cyber and physical risk management.

Fast forward to 2024: President Biden issued National Security Memorandum 22 (“NSM-22”), replacing PPD-21. NSM-22 builds upon the foundation of its predecessor but goes further in several key areas. First, it designates DHS to lead a whole-of-government effort to secure critical infrastructure, with the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (“CISA”) serving as the National Coordinator for Security and Resilience. Second, it emphasizes enforceable minimum security and resilience standards across all sectors. Third, it tasks DHS with producing a National Risk Management Plan every two years. Fourth, it directs CISA to maintain a confidential list of systemically important critical infrastructure entities. And fifth, it mandates improved collaboration between the Intelligence Community and infrastructure stakeholders to ensure timely, actionable information sharing.

Since their inception, DHS and CISA have significantly improved interagency coordination and information sharing to maintain situational awareness across a wide spectrum of threats. However, questions remain about how effectively these agencies have integrated the private sector into the national effort to protect critical infrastructure.

Despite the lack of a definitive study, it is widely cited that approximately 85% of the nation’s critical infrastructure is owned and operated by the private sector. For C-suite leaders in oil and gas, maritime, and chemical sectors—industries that form the backbone of national critical functions—this statistic underscores a hard truth: you are on the front lines. Yet, too often, the information flow from government to industry is inconsistent or delayed. One-way communication, primarily from industry to government, remains the norm. That model is outdated.

DHS and CISA have made undeniable progress. CISA, in particular, has improved the speed at which it declassifies and distributes cyberthreat intelligence, including Indicators of Compromise—sometimes within days of their discovery. But in today’s fast-moving threat environment, that’s not enough. What we need is a real-time, bidirectional, operationalized flow of information that allows companies to respond with precision and speed.

This leads to core strategic questions: Who is responsible for protecting our critical infrastructure? If the burden lies solely with the federal government, then the current approach may be justifiable. But if your sector—which owns and operates the bulk of these assets—shares that responsibility, then being kept out of the real-time loop until a threat is imminent is unacceptable. This model must evolve.

With over 23 years of experience working in government and alongside critical infrastructure partners, I can say with certainty: infrastructure protection is a shared responsibility. But that begs the question—how should that responsibility be executed, and who pays for it? Industry already contributes via structures like Information Sharing and Analysis Centers, which are critical, but not universally accessible. Many smaller firms or underfunded facilities see these as “pay-to-play” and are left out of the broader resilience conversation.

In sectors where the consequences of disruption could be catastrophic—this presents an urgent call to rethink how public-private partnerships work. It’s time to reimagine engagement, ensure equitable access to threat intelligence, and establish a true operational partnership between government and industry.

In conclusion, critical infrastructure is more secure and resilient today than it was before 9/11. However, our adversaries have evolved, so we must evolve faster. The 9/11 Commission warned us: “We believe the 9/11 attacks revealed four kinds of failures: in imagination, policy, capabilities, and management. The most important failure was one of imagination.”

Let’s not fail again. Let’s innovate boldly. Let’s out-think, out-prepare, and outpace the threats. Let’s flip the script—before someone else writes the ending for us.

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*This article marks the first in a three-part series focused on one of the most pressing questions facing our nation.*



# Port of Galveston Celebrating 200 Years of Maritime Commerce



Photo: An 1861 photo of the Port of Galveston showing Central Wharf, located at the foot of 21st Street, as seen from the top of the Hendley Building on the Strand. (Courtesy Rosenberg Library, Galveston, Texas)

Spanning two centuries, the Port of Galveston’s fascinating history could fill a book with tales of pirates, naval battles, riches, and resilience. The port is marking its 200th anniversary in 2025 with public events, publication of a history book and more.

“We’re planning a full year of activities to share the port’s history, spotlight contributions by the port and its port partners, and celebrate our past, present and future,” said Rodger Rees, Galveston Wharves port director and CEO.



## A long, rich history

Galveston, or Galvez’s town, was named after 18th-century Spanish military and political leader Bernardo de Gálvez, first Count of Gálvez (1746–1786), who was born in the Kingdom of Spain. The Port of Galveston is the oldest port west of the Mississippi River. Used by pirate Jean Laffite from 1818 to 1821, it was soon thereafter used as a common port, principally for the growing Austin colony. It was established by a proclamation issued by the Congress of Mexico on October 17, 1825, while the land known as Texas still belonged to Mexico.

The port played a vital commercial and military role in the Texas Republic’s battle for independence from Mexico. Its harbor was home to the Texas Navy, a squadron of four sailing vessels, which contributed to Sam Houston’s success over General Antonio Lopez de Santa Ana at the Battle of San Jacinto in 1836. As the natural harbor grew in prominence, the city of Galveston, founded in 1839, grew around the port.

In the 1850s, the Port of Galveston exported goods valued almost 20 times what was imported. The main export was cotton. The Galveston Wharf Company took control of the port in 1869 and built a grain elevator in 1875, leading Galveston to become a major grain exporter. By the 1870s, the Port of Galveston was a major U.S. commercial center with far-reaching maritime and rail connections. By 1878, the Port of Galveston was the nation’s third largest cotton exporter and winning \$6.2 million in federal funding in 1890 to become a deepwater port. In 1900, Galveston was ranked the fifth most important port in the country. Exports totaled more than 85 million dollars with the port ranking first place in the export of cotton and third in wheat exports.

Galveston’s wealth was due in large part to the port’s activity. The port continued to primarily export agricultural goods. Local leaders often blamed the lack of industrial goods to export on the city’s lack of an adequate water supply. However, when the city water project finished in the early 1890s, industrialization still did not occur. Many companies were hesitant to invest in machinery on an island prone to floods. In addition, Houston was better to attract industry and positioned themselves as a key alternative to Galveston.

The port survived the Galveston Hurricane of 1900, but the railroad connecting the island to the mainland suffered major damage. In response to the hurricane, city leaders dredged Galveston’s ship channel to raise the island’s grade making it a deep-water port to handle larger ships. By 1914, Galveston was the leading cotton port in the world, the third-largest exporter of wheat, and an important sugar import center. The port also became a major immigration center soliciting immigration to help recovery and rebuild, with almost 50,000 people entering the country between 1907 and 1914.

The Intracoastal Waterway opened in 1933. In 1940, the citizens of Galveston voted to buy the privately held port properties to become a self-sustaining city entity, which it remains today.



Photo: Port of Galveston is ranked as the fourth busiest cruise port in the U.S. and a major U.S. cargo post. (Galveston Wharves courtesy photo. By Robert John Mihovil.)

In the 1990s, port officials attempted to bring modern cruise ships to Galveston. In 2000, the Carnival Cruise Lines ship *Celebration* debarked from the Port of Galveston. Other ships based in Galveston in the first years, were small and older. In 2006, the port invested more than \$85 million to build and improve facilities to bring more ships in.

The port is equipped to handle all types of cargo including containers, dry and liquid bulk, breakbulk, RO/RO, refrigerated, and project cargoes. The Galveston Railroad, a terminal switching railroad, facilitates movement of cargo by rail. In April 2016, a BMW vehicle distribution center was opened at the port. This was the result of a public-private partnership that the port entered into with Wallenius Wilhelmsen Logistics Vehicle Services Americas

Since then, key milestones have included the federal harbor deepening from 36 feet to 40 feet in 1976, longtime tenant Wallenius Lines moving its cargo operations to the port in 1995, and arrival of the Carnival *Celebration*, the first cruise ship to homeport here, in 2000.

Today, the 840-acre port is a thriving commercial center with infrastructure and assets to serve growing cruise, cargo and commercial





Photo: Tourist enjoying Pier 21 in Galveston, Texas.

businesses. The port is the fourth most popular cruise home port in the U.S., hosting five major cruise lines. More than 3.4 million cruise passengers moved through the port’s three terminals in 2024. The port also leases and maintains a wide range of cargo facilities on the deep-water Galveston Harbor and ranked among the top 40 busiest U.S. cargo waterways.

Events planned for the 200th anniversary later in the year for the community are:

- Party on the Pier. Slated for Oct. 17, this event will be presented by Royal Caribbean with a spectacular drone show, live music, a Jean Lafitte lookalike contest, food trucks and family fun. Mexico designated Galveston a provisional port of entry on Oct. 17, 1825, while under Mexican rule.
- Bicentennial Gala. Carnival Cruise Line will present an elegant evening of dinner and dancing at the Port of Galveston’s 200th Anniversary Gala at the Galveston Island Convention Center.
- Port history book to be published in October.

For more information about future Port of Galveston events, go to: [www.portofgalveston200.com](http://www.portofgalveston200.com).

U.S. Navy ships, sailors, and marines will travel to Houston November 5-12 to bring the first-ever Fleet Week to the state of Texas.

The week-long event will feature tours of the ships, military history and heritage information booths, and displays of military equipment. The event will serve as an opportunity to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps. All tours of the ships are free.

Fleet Week Houston will also provide opportunities for service members to see local landmarks, perform volunteer work, visit local schools, attend entertainment events, and most importantly experience Houston hospitality.

The always popular Navy Band Southeast will perform at a variety of locations throughout the week.

Currently, three ships and more than 1,000 service members are anticipated to be a part of the festivities.

More information will be released as it becomes available via [www.fleetweekhouston.com](http://www.fleetweekhouston.com), and the best way to keep abreast of the newest details is to follow Fleet Week Houston on social media on Facebook and Instagram @FleetWeekHouston.



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# Captain Nicole Rodriguez Assumes Command of Sector Houston-Galveston, U.S. Coast Guard



At a U.S. Coast Guard change-of-command ceremony on April 17, Captain Keith Donohue relinquished his command of U.S. Coast Guard Sector Houston-Galveston and retired after 28 years of service. Relieving Donohue and becoming the new connander is Captain Nicole Rodriguez. She assumes command after serving two years as deputy sector commander. It was a historic moment as Rodriguez is the first woman to serve in the lead role for Sector Houston-Galveston.

The 8th Coast Guard District is responsible for U.S. Coast Guard operations spanning 26 states, including the Gulf of Mexico coastline from Florida to Mexico, the adjacent offshore waters and outer continental shelf, as well as the inland waterways of the Mississippi, Ohio, Missouri, Illinois, and Tennessee River systems. It also oversees 247 miles of waterways from Freeport to Lake Charles, making up 25% of the total U.S. tonnage carried by ships and 20% of the U.S. Marine Transportation System in dollar value. It includes the largest petrochemical facility with four of the nation's top ten largest refineries; three of the nation's four Strategic Petroleum Reserve facilities; six of the top 25 busiest ports in the U.S., the fourth busiest cruise ship port in the U.S.; two military outload ports; and the fifth largest container terminal in the U.S.

The Sector employs 1562 active duty, civilian, and reserve personnel across the Sector, three Marine Safety Units, five Multi-Mission Small Boat Stations, two Aids to Navigations Stations, and six Coast Guard Cutters to ensure the safety and security of the area. Sector Houston-Galveston's area of responsibility is a strategic and economically vital part of the nation's economic security. The Greater Galveston Bay and Golden Triangle Port Complexes encompass five of the 20 busiest ports to include the ports of Houston (largest port in the nation with 268 million tons/year), Beaumont (4th single largest), Lake Charles (12th), Texas City (15th), Port Arthur (17th), Freeport, and Galveston as well as 247 miles of Gulf Intracoastal Waterways. Together these ports and waterways account for 25% of the total U.S. tonnage by ships and contribute over \$1 trillion to nation's economy. Because of the size of the industry in area, there are two separate Captain of the Port zones Houston and Port Arthur. Since the start of 2019, the Sector has responded to three Type 1 Incidents that included a facility fire, hurricanes, and vessel collisions and a transportation security incident. Additionally, these crews performed 375 Search and Rescue cases, protected \$7,343,096 of property, and continuously strengthened relationships with partners across the AOR through jointly coordinated efforts for the secure transport of maritime



cargo, protection of maritime resources, and responses to manmade and natural disasters.

Captain Rodriguez previous operational assignments include Commanding Officer of MSU Lake Charles from 2021- 2023 where she served as Field Commander representing MSU Port Arthur in execution of Captain of the Port, Officer in Charge of Marine Inspection, Federal On-Scene Coordinator, and Federal Maritime Security Coordinator authorities overseeing maritime operations over an 8,400 square mile area of responsibility in Southwest Louisiana. She also served as Commanding Officer of Marine Safety Unit Baton Rouge from 2013-2016 where she served as Field Commander in support of the Coast Guard's maritime safety, security and environmental protections missions for an area spanning over 230 river miles.

Other operational tours include Chief of Prevention for Sector Houston-Galveston where she oversaw foreign and domestic vessel compliance, port facility safety and security, ports and waterways management, aids to navigation, and marine causality investigation; Chief of the Investigations Division for Sector Baltimore; and marine inspector and port operations officer for Group/Marine Safety Office Los Angeles-Long Beach.

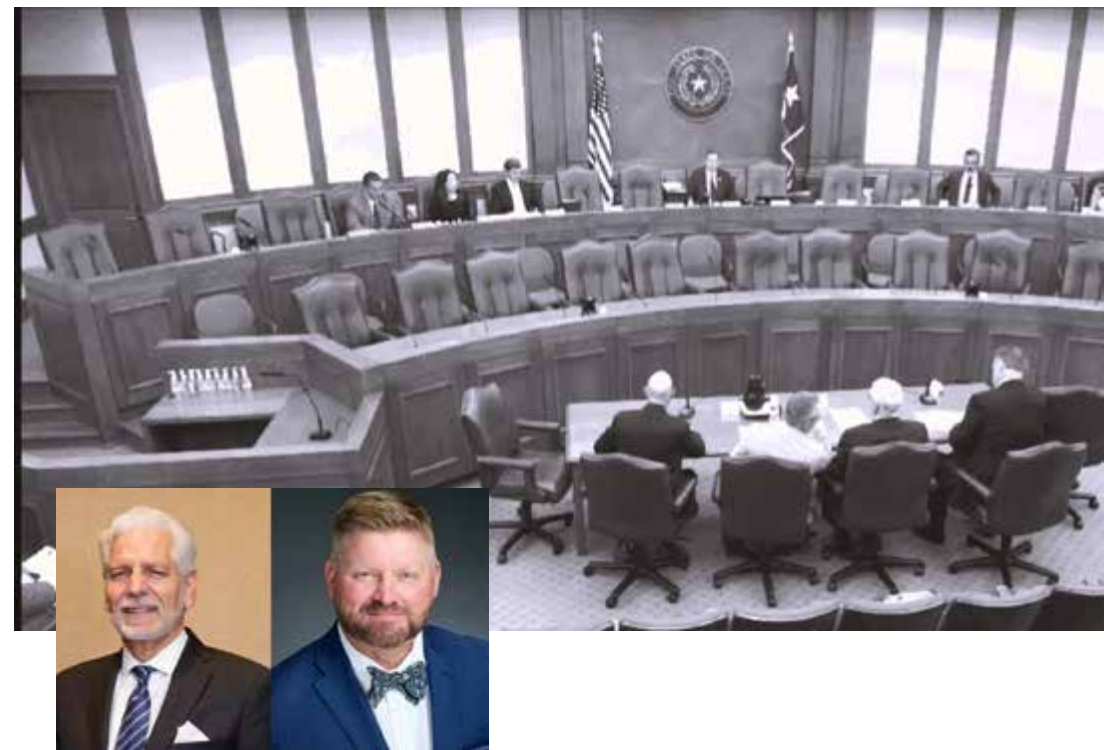
Previous staff tours include assignment as Chief of Inspections and Investigations for the Eighth Coast Guard District headquarters in New Orleans, where she was responsible for the District's marine safety, security, and stewardship initiatives for 26 states including the inland waterways system and Gulf of Mexico. Additionally, she served as Program Reviewer for the Coast Guard's Human Resources directorate, the Offices of Shore and Boat Forces, and Search and Rescue Directorate while assigned to the Office of Budget and Programs at Coast Guard Headquarters in Washington, D.C.

Captain Rodriguez is a prior recipient of the Congressman James Sener Award for Excellence in Marine Investigations and is certified as a Maritime Port Executive. She holds a Bachelor of Arts from James Madison University and a master's in public administration from The George Washington University.

*Fair Winds, following seas and full steam ahead  
CAPT Rodriguez!*



# January 2025 Commerce Club Luncheon: A ‘Fireside Chat’ with Jeffery Strickland, BGR | Group



The Port Bureau kicked off the first Commerce Club luncheon of 2025 by presenting a “fireside chat” discussion of current and future state/federal government policies, funding and rulemaking processes, and more that could impact Texas and port region industry.

Vincent DiCosimo, senior vice president-government affairs at Targa Resources as well as the Port Bureau’s chairman served as moderator, with Jerry Strickland, principal and Texas director at BGR | Group, discussing the outlook.

- Highlights from the discussion included:
- Expectations that the new administration will move quickly with actions through Executive Orders, particularly in the areas of border security, energy (including red tape reduction), and a reduction in government spending.
  - Tax cuts initiated in 2017 (Tax Cuts and Jobs Act or TCJA) will expire at the end of 2025 – and a new tax package will need to be developed.
  - Potential for reductions to Medicaid spending at the state and federal levels.
  - In the Texas legislature, the focus will most likely be on school choice, property taxes, and ensuring sufficient water (including repair and upgrades to aging water infrastructure) for electricity generation.
  - Potential for Texas lawmakers to limit rises in property insurance premiums.

Stickland particularly noted his appreciation for the role Port Bureau and its members represent in forwarding progress for the port region in Austin and in Washington DC.

“I have seen the success of this region because of the people in this room. I've seen the work that the Port Bureau has done firsthand, both in Washington, DC and in Austin. It is no secret that when you guys come into the door, you guys come with heft. You guys come with sophistication; you guys come ready to go - and people listen! The Greater Houston Port Bureau is an organization that gets things done.”

As principal and Texas Director at BGR, Strickland practices at the federal, state, and local levels. Prior to joining BGR, he served as Governor Greg Abbott’s appointee to lead the Texas Office of State-Federal Relations, where he ran Texas’s federal affairs office and was lead advisor to the governor on federal issues.

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# February 2025 Commerce Club Luncheon: Featuring Charlie Jenkins, CEO, Port Houston



Charlie Jenkins, CEO of Port Houston, presented “Uniquely Houston”, an update on Port Houston’s operations while highlighting its distinctive qualities in the port industry at the Port Bureau’s February Commerce Club luncheon.

Jenkins pinpointed the Houston Ship Channel’s development as the first public/private partnership between government and community for matching funds that led to the orginzation uniquely collaborating for other productive initiatives in Houston over the years, such as the Port Terminal Railroad Association in 1924, Harris County Flood Control District in 1937, and the Houston Ship Channel Security District in 2009.

Port Houston facilitates vital commerce, serving as an advocate and a strategic leader of the Houston Ship Channel and managing eight public terminals. Jenkins noted the “incredible” growth of tonnage on the Houston Ship Channel, contrasting the 389,000 tons of cotton moved on the waterway in 1898 to 300 million tons today (as of 2024), comprised of 71% liquid bulk, 15% containerized cargo, 7% general cargo, 4% project cargo, and 3% dry bulk.

Record tonnage was recorded at Port Houston’s public facilities in 2024, a total of 53M in total tonnage, with 4.1M in TEUs. Port Houston manages Foreign Trade Zone 84 (“FTZ 84”), which includes many port-owned and privately owned sites located throughout Harris, Wharton, and Waller counties. FTZ 84 added nine new sites last year – another record – and it is ranked first in the U.S. for total merchandise.

An investment of \$2.4 billion by Port Houston over the past five years has led to the rehabilitation of wharves and yards; added container storage space, expanded the entrance of Barbours Cut terminal, enabled the addition of 53 new Rubber Tire Gantry cranes, three new STS cranes, and accelerated work on Project 11 – the expansion of the Houston Ship Channel.

Port Houston plans to increase capacity by investing \$1.9 billion on landside public facilities over the next five years. Plans call for additional wharves at the Bayport Container Terminal, more ship-to-shore and Rubber Tire Gantry cranes, additional container yards, rehabilitation of wharves and yards, and redevelopment of general cargo and breakbulk docks.

Addressing the successful progress of Project 11, Jenkins said Port Houston’s portions are “near complete”, and the additional sections of the expansion project will be led by the Army Corps of Engineers.

Wrapping up, Jenkins said Port Houston stays active with the community. Port Houston has invested \$2 million in green spaces over the past three years, awarded \$1.65 million in dozens of grants to organizations since 2020, and engaged with 80,000 community members in 2024.

Jenkins was named Chief Executive Officer of Port Houston in September 2024. He oversees the advocacy and stewardship of the Houston Ship Channel, working in partnership with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for channel maintenance and improvements. Jenkins also oversees the efficient and effective operations of Port Houston’s public facilities, which handle a diverse range of imports and exports including containers, general cargo, breakbulk, and bulk commodities.

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March Commerce Club Luncheon Featuring Jesse Thompson, Sr. Business Economist, Houston Branch of the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas



Outlook 2025: Return to Trend?



Jesse Thompson, senior business economist of the Houston Branch of the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas offered his 2025 economic outlook through his “Return to Trend?” presentation at the Port Bureau’s March Commerce Club luncheon.

In his overview, Thompson noted that business conditions and optimism deteriorated in February and March. Manufacturing remained soft, and uncertainty was elevated. Investment and new construction were robust, amid well supplied energy markets. The U.S. looks to be on course for trend GDP growth and full employment, but downside risks are rising. Progress toward 2% inflation continues, but tariffs and rising uncertainty cloud the outlook.

The Texas job growth forecast for '25 has been oscillating around trend (~1.7%), with the current (as of March) forecast at 1.9% growth after revising '24 data and a strong January '25. “Slowing to trend” was inevitable and risks are weighted to the downside.

“Two months of data doesn't necessarily make a trend, right? But it is a very noteworthy reversal from where we were at over the better part of the last year,” said Thompson.

He described energy markets as “well-supplied”, stressing their importance in looking ahead for Houston: “The thing that always separates our outlook from the outlook of the rest of the country has been oil and gas.”

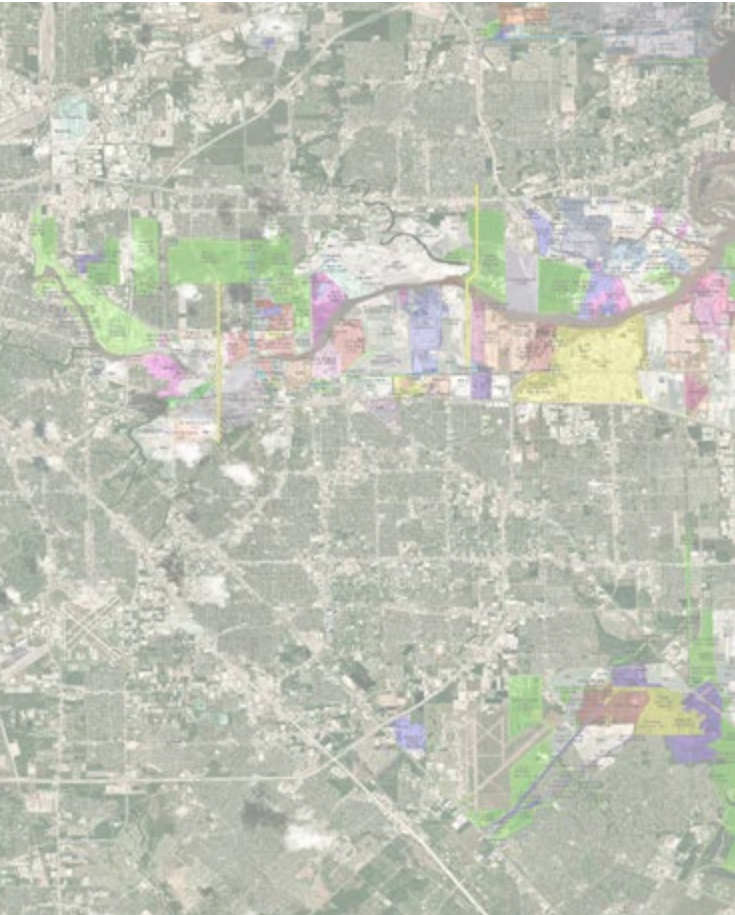
Thompson showed multiple charts of data as he discussed the macro backdrop factors that influence the Houston (and Texas) economy, including GDP, wages, international migration, inflation and more. He also discussed industrial construction, noting Texas is “outpacing” the U.S.; oil and gas – U.S. crude output growth is expected to slow further

in '25, with rising oil and gas output flowing through to exports – as well as residential and commercial real estate factors.

Examining the outlook and risks ahead, Thompson identified risks as stemming from geopolitics and domestic policy. His key takeaway thoughts included an erosion in momentum as uncertainty “weighs” on business confidence. Uncertainty is also likely to delay new investment decisions in the commercial, industrial and energy infrastructure sectors. Texas’ 0.8% job growth premium over the U.S. is likely “preserved” in 2025, with Texas growth at nearly 1.9% by yearend.

Thompson closed the presentation with his thanks and a request for input from the port community.

“I want to say we do need your input. We have a number of surveys across the energy sector, manufacturing service sector, and the retail sector, and we comb these comments. Join the survey. Follow us on social media.”



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- July 10:** GHPB Commerce Club guest speaker: Geir Eilif Kalhagen, TXDOT, Maritime Division Director.
- July 18:** Hybrid Port 101. CAPT Eric Carrero, President of the Port Bureau, will lead an informative session on the port region and ways to become more involved in the maritime business community.
- August 23:** GHPB 96th Annual Maritime Dinner honoring Roger Guenther.
- September 11:** GHPB Commerce Club guest speaker: Sector Commander, Sector Houston-Galveston Nicole Rodriguez

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