



136 S. Bronough St.  
Tallahassee, FL 32301  
Phone: (850) 521-1200  
Fax: (850) 521-1203  
[www.floridachamber.com](http://www.floridachamber.com)

October 1, 2012

The Honorable Bill Nelson  
United States Senate  
716 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington DC 20510

**Re: Miami International Airport Needs More Customs Officials to Help Secure Florida's Future**

Dear Senator Nelson:

International passengers arriving at airports across Florida are experiencing increasingly burdensome wait times as they process through customs. This delayed processing time frequently causes passengers to miss connecting flights and is of great concern to the Florida Chamber of Commerce in light of the important role that international tourism plays in our state's economy.

The Florida Chamber joins Governor Rick Scott in his recent request to U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano for more customs officials at Miami International Airport (MIA) – the busiest airport in the nation for international passengers, ranking first in international flights and second in number of passengers. As Governor Scott noted in his letter, the customs problem at MIA makes Florida less competitive on the international stage. That is why he requested Secretary Napolitano ensure that at least 62 of the 72 customs lines at MIA be open at all times, based upon an industrial engineering study participated in by the airport, airlines and CBP.

More than 30,000 international travelers missed their connecting flights at MIA after waiting for customs in August 2012. Delays in the Customs process is the most significant factor generating this problem. Furthermore, large and small airports across Florida have expressed the same concerns and warn things will get worse if nothing is done.

According to the U.S. Department of Commerce's Office of Travel and Tourism, the United States is on pace for a record setting year for inbound tourism spending. This will not be sustainable over the long-term if visitor processing does not improve. Having international passengers wait for several hours in customs after flying for 8-12 hours is simply unacceptable. These types of delays, especially when compounded with missed flights, set back efforts at both the state and national levels to encourage international tourism.

Last year alone, Florida welcomed 9.3 million overseas visitors and more than 3 million Canadian visitors. Communities across the Sunshine State depend on international visitors. The Florida Chamber supports Governor Scott's request for more Customs and Border Patrol staffing in airports across Florida.

To secure Florida's future, this issue must be addressed or the Sunshine State could potentially miss an opportunity to grow the international tourism industry at both the state and national levels.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David A. Hart".

David A. Hart  
Executive Vice President

cc: The Honorable Rick Scott, Governor of the State of Florida  
Mark Wilson, President & CEO, Florida Chamber of Commerce