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## When will the feds really help our ports?

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THE Port of Oakland is still waiting for desperately needed federal funding to help with security. For some reason, the U.S. government has not helped one of the nation's most vulnerable portals to a terrorist attack.

Instead of sitting around waiting for disaster to happen, the Port of Oakland, which received no federal security funding this year, is proposing the use of transportation bond money approved by voters on Nov. 7 to boost their matching funds for acquiring federal money to improve security, a state Senate Office of Research report said.

The \$20 billion bond allows \$100 million for port security, though it was intended, yet not limited, to use for equipment. It could also be used toward matching grants to entice federal funding. The feds want a local match when awarding grants for projects. But the Port of Oakland took a further step, offering more than the 25 percent minimum in matching funds to shake the federal tree. Eve Grossman said, the port's government affairs manager, U.S. homeland security officials are interested. Of course, they are. They're probably waiting to see how much can be squeezed from this state.

The Department of Homeland Security tells us it spent \$1.6 billion on port security in 2005, as opposed to only \$259 million in 2001. Yet, of those 2005 funds allocated, the Port of Oakland received a whopping ... \$2.9 million.

Perhaps the federal government needs to examine some facts about the Port of Oakland and other California ports. The Port of Oakland processes about \$30 billion in exports and imports every year and is the fourth busiest container port in the nation.

The Public Policy Institute of California found that the state's largest sea ports, including Long Beach and Los Angeles, handle 40 percent of all containers coming across U.S. docks.

All the Port of Oakland was asking from Homeland Security this year was \$6 million toward an \$8 million security project. In September, the port was denied. If it were not for the voters, the Port of Oakland would have had few, if any, options.

The need for greater security is pressing, according to a Senate report. A terrorist attack at the Port of Oakland, the report said, could affect the entire Bay Area — not only through a loss of lives, but by also delivering a devastating blow to our economy.

Though the use of state bonds might help offset federal disinterest, there are still some problems attached. State lawmakers are trying to raise funds for port security at a time when California faces a multibillion-dollar deficit, and Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger vetoed a cargo-fee assessment that would have provided funds for additional security.

Should California be the victim of geography? The state sits in a prime location on the Pacific Ocean and is a hub for worldwide shipping. The operation of our ports affects the entire country. Shouldn't the federal government put more funds on the table for the well-being, not only of this region or state, but our nation overall?

It's been clear since before 9/11 that our ports need more security. The feds need to ante up. Do we need another disaster before they act?