

CITY OF OAKLAND



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Open Letter to Occupy Protestors

Today you hope to shut down the Port of Oakland. The rest of the 99% of Oakland wonders why? What is the target in this action? Who will it really hurt?

The Occupy Movement has raised important issues to which the country—and especially Oakland—can relate. Throughout my life—as a college student, union organizer and parent even before I was elected to office—I have fought to improve wages, health care, education and the quality of life for people of all walks of life. So I, along with hundreds of thousands of Oakland residents, share the concerns of the Occupy Movement. But I question the strategy of trying to shut down the Port of Oakland today.

The Port of Oakland is not the home of the 1%. Rather, it generates over 73,000 jobs in the region and is connected to more than 800,000 jobs across the country. It is one of the best sources of good paying blue-collar jobs left in our City.

During the recession the amount of work for port workers has dropped by about 5% in Oakland and would be worse if it were not for agricultural exports from the Central Valley and beyond. Oakland is the only US port that exports more than it imports. Exporters make decisions based on many factors, but Port officials are concerned that a second shutdown will send the wrong message about Oakland in this highly competitive business. Truckers, warehouse workers, longshoremen, and agricultural workers could all be affected. Shutting down the Port for even one day can cost farmers in the Valley hundreds of thousands of dollars in lost income because they time their shipments to the peak quality of their produce.

The Port is major economic engine for the City and the region, and the City has made extraordinary efforts to attract investment in the Port and its supporting industries. The Council has made clear decisions to protect the industrial zoning on the waterfront to encourage investment in blue-collar jobs. I have spent much of the year advocating for federal and state funds to expand the Port. I have worked closely with the Obama administration to try to promote his goal of doubling exports; in the Bay Area that would mean 5,000 more jobs.

In conversations with the International Longshoreman's Workers Union and the Building Trades Council which has just passed a resolution to oppose the closure and other unions, it is clear that they do not support another shut down. Neither does the City of Oakland, a city that typifies the 99%. We are a city of Mom and Pop businesses, innovative start ups, teachers, nurses, blue-color workers and others who are struggling with lay-offs, cut-backs, foreclosures and other impacts of

this devastating recession. How does shutting down the Port and causing thousands of workers to lose a day's pay create positive change?

I encourage those who want to make a statement on Monday to do so peacefully and respectfully—and to keep the Port open—the livelihoods of many of the 99% here in Oakland and throughout Northern California depend on it.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jean Quan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jean Quan
Mayor of Oakland