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Statement of USA Maritime Opposing the President's Budget Proposal to Effectively End the PL-480 Food for Peace Program

WASHINGTON D.C. – USA Maritime Chairman James L. Henry issued the following statement in response to the release today of the President's FY 2014 budget proposal. Included in the proposal was a recommendation that the Food for Peace Title II humanitarian assistance program be significantly altered, with almost half its funding diverted to another program.

“USA Maritime is severely disappointed that the Obama Administration has moved forward with this misguided proposal to effectively eliminate the long-standing and successful Food for Peace program,” said James L. Henry, chairman of USA Maritime. “Despite recent letters from Congress to the White House that demonstrate strong, bipartisan support for this program, the Administration is still advocating an unnecessary and harmful change to our flagship international aid program. We continue to view this proposal as shortsighted and seriously damaging to both national security and merchant mariner jobs.”

“Since 1954, Food for Peace alone has benefited more than 3 billion people in 150 countries and is an important symbol of America's goodwill. Unlike other foreign aid programs, this time-tested program does more than just send aid overseas. Food for Peace is a point of pride for the 44,000 American farmers, shippers, processors, longshoremen, and merchant mariners whose jobs depend upon the program. Food for Peace leverages private and public resources to make a meaningful difference for millions of people in a way that Government cash handouts simply cannot.”

“Food for Peace is not only one of our premiere diplomatic tools, but it is also an important component of our national security. By ensuring a steady flow of American cargo shipped by Americans on U.S.-flag ships, PL-480 helps maintain our Merchant Marine, which is critical for our ability to support our troops and first responders in time of war or national emergency. In fact, American mariners on commercial U.S.-flag vessels delivered more than 90 percent of defense cargo to military posts in Iraq and Afghanistan. According to the Department of Defense, without the base of food aid cargoes to help sustain the commercial U.S.-flag fleet, we will not be able to sustain the national defense sealift capability our military needs without significant additional Federal expenditures.”

“The Administration's proposals to shift funding to a system of global food stamp-vouchers, or to shift to purchases of food aid from allegedly cheaper foreign suppliers instead of



donating wholesome commodities grown by American farmers will be harmful to our US Merchant Marine, harmful to our national defense sealift capability, harmful to our farmers and millers, and bad for our economy. USA Maritime strongly encourages Congress to reject the Administration's misguided proposal, maintain the current program and sustain PL 480 Food for Peace funding. Doing so will ensure that this program continues to focus on the reliable export of safe and nutritious U.S.-grown commodities to those in need overseas."

"We all agree on the importance of reducing spending during these trying economic times, but the Food for Peace program has already been cut 35 percent since 2008 despite increased need among the most vulnerable populations in the world. Now is not the time to drastically alter the most dependable tool we have to fight global hunger – a tool that has been working for over 50 years. And in a time when unemployment remains a major obstacle to economic growth, shipping American jobs overseas is the last thing any Administration should be proposing."

About USA Maritime

USA Maritime is a coalition of ship owning companies, maritime labor organizations and maritime trade associations committed to protecting our national security through a public-private partnership that features the U.S. Merchant Marine. During times of war, natural disaster and famine around the globe, the U.S. Merchant Marine is always there, safely and cost-effectively delivering essential equipment and supplies, as well as needed food to hundreds of thousands of people worldwide.

For more information, please visit: (<http://www.usamaritime.org/>)

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