



Bruce K. Butler  
Executive Director

# NAVY LEAGUE

of the United States



Citizens in Support  
of the Sea Services

May 7, 2013

The Honorable Harry Reid  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Boehner  
Speaker of the House  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Minority Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader Reid, Minority Leader McConnell, Speaker Boehner and Minority Leader Pelosi:

On behalf of the 47,000 members and 250 councils of the Navy League of the United States, we urge you to reject the Administration's FY 2014 budget request proposing to eliminate the PL 480 Food for Peace Program, which would put at risk 44,000 American jobs in the merchant marine and farming communities.

Of chief importance to the Navy League, the proposed elimination of this important program will significantly undermine the U.S.-flag Merchant Marine and our national defense sealift capability. The United States Merchant Marine has been a necessary part of our national independence of action since the founding of our nation. More than 95% of surge and sustainment cargoes to support the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq during the past decade were carried on U.S. flag commercial and government ships all of which were crewed by civilian U.S. citizen merchant mariners.

The U.S. government relies on the U.S.-flag, U.S.-crewed ships in a public-private partnership with the Department of Defense to ensure the trusted and reliable transportation of critical cargo anywhere in the world at any time—especially during times of national emergency. According to a recent Lloyd's report, China will own more than third of the world's shipping tonnage by 2030. Without an independent, American merchant marine, both our economy and our military are at the mercy of foreign actors and foreign governments.

Because we can rely upon the U.S.-flag commercial fleet, our nation achieves significant savings by not having to replicate those 100 commercial ships in international trade and 11,500 mariners with federal assets. To recreate the capacity it obtains from the U.S.-flag commercial industry, the Department of Defense would have to incur an additional \$9 billion in capital costs and \$1 billion in annual operating costs. Leveraging the private fleet is good deal for the taxpayer, and certainly offsets any putative savings to be achieved under the Administration's PL 480 elimination scheme.

Since the passage of MAP-21 last summer, one third of U.S. food aid cargo preference was eliminated and has resulted in the loss of at least four U.S. flag vessels and more than 200 U.S. mariner jobs. Any loss of U.S. flag commercial vessels results in the reduction of jobs necessary to sustain a viable supply of trained and experienced mariners necessary to meet our U.S. security needs.

The Administration's scheme will needlessly sacrifice a valuable component of our economic and defense capability that will take many years and many billions of taxpayer dollars to rebuild. The Navy League strongly recommends rejecting the proposed changes and upholding the current structure of PL 480 in order to retain the ships and jobs necessary to maintain our U.S. merchant mariner pool.

Thank you,

Bruce K. Butler  
National Executive Director  
Navy League of the United States