

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 7, 2018

The Honorable Elaine Chao, Secretary
United States Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

The Honorable Jim Mattis, Secretary
United States Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Chao and Secretary Mattis:

Recently, representatives from the Department of Transportation and the Department of Defense have testified to the dangerous decline in our nation's U.S.-flag commercial sealift capability and a shortfall of approximately 2,000 American merchant mariners needed to crew the vessels supporting our troops deployed overseas. We are greatly alarmed that this situation has developed and are writing to urge the Administration to act expeditiously and forcefully to bolster the U.S.-flag merchant marine through enforcement of our existing "Ship American" laws for government-impelled cargo.

The United States has always relied on the U.S.-flag merchant marine and its American merchant mariners to protect and enhance our economic security and national defense. American flag vessels and their crews have always responded quickly and effectively to the call of duty, never failing to provide the commercial sealift sustainment capability and manpower needed by the Department of Defense to support America's objectives around the world. The U.S. Transportation Command was deliberate in their assessment that the "merchant marine is inextricably linked to the Department of Defense's ability to project power." Without this capability under our own flag, and without a sufficient number of American mariners, we will be forced to turn over America's security interests and the well-being of our overseas troops to foreign flag, foreign crewed vessels owned and operated by those who may not choose to support us.

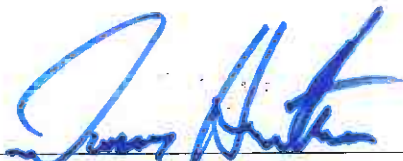
The Maritime Administration has indicated in testimony that our nation's ability to fully activate, deploy and sustain our military forces is between "medium to high risk." It is, therefore, critically important that the Administration takes immediate action in directing its efforts to support policies and programs that serve to enhance the U.S.-flag merchant marine, including existing cargo preference requirements. These requirements stipulate that a percentage of U.S. government-impelled cargoes be transported on privately-owned U.S.-flag commercial vessels. Government-impelled cargoes are not limited to those shipped directly by a Department or Agency but include government-financed projects and government contracts issued to private companies.

Full enforcement of these requirements can be an important factor in achieving the U.S.-flag merchant fleet necessary to meet our national goals. All too often, Federal agencies have failed to comply with applicable U.S.-flag shipping requirements, denying American vessels the taxpayer-financed cargoes they're intended and eliminating important mariner jobs in the process. Failure to comply with cargo preference also means that American taxpayer dollars are being used

to finance the cost of foreign shipping services. We ask that you encourage the President to affirm the Administration's support for Ship American and to direct all Executive Branch departments and agencies to fully comply with the spirit and the letter of existing U.S.-flag cargo preference shipping requirements. It should also be affirmed that if questions arise as to the applicability of cargo preference shipping requirements to a Federal program, the U.S. Maritime Administration is the final arbiter.

Thank you for your attention to reversing the serious decline in our U.S.-flag fleet and mariner workforce to ensure they can meet the needs of the Department of Defense. Concerted and immediate action is required, and we stand ready to work with you to achieve these objectives.

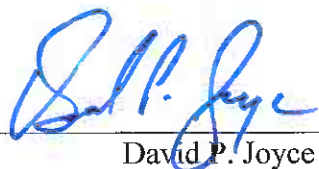
Sincerely,



Duncan Hunter



John Garamendi



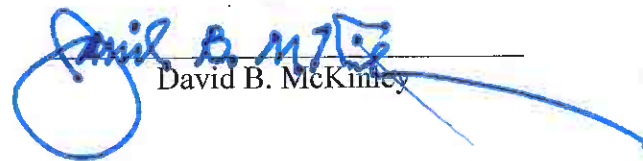
David P. Joyce



Cedric L. Richmond



Thomas R. Suozzi



David B. McKinley



Josh Gottheimer



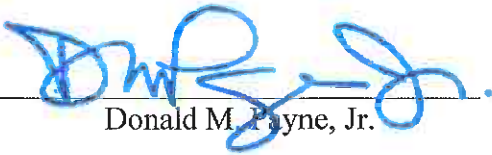
Walter B. Jones



Christopher H. Smith



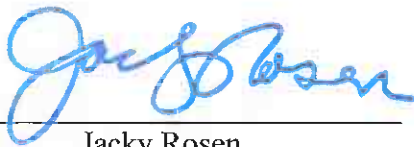
Scott H. Peters



Donald M. Payne, Jr.



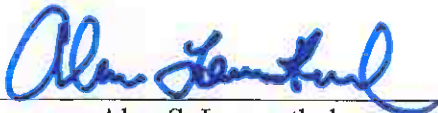
Sean Patrick Maloney



Jacky Rosen




Bob Gibbs



Alan S. Lowenthal



Daniel Lipinski



Gene Green



Peter T. King



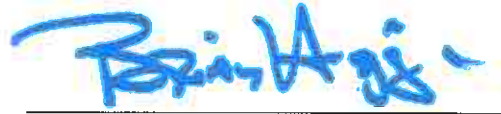
Linda T. Sánchez



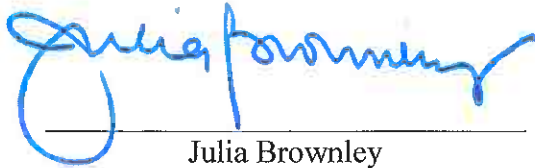
Brian K. Fitzpatrick



Tim Kyan



Brian Higgins



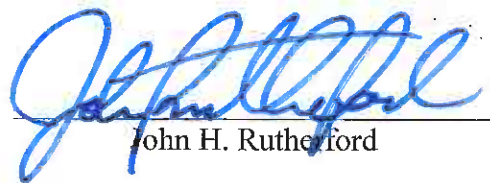
Julia Brownley



Vicente Gonzalez



Betty McCollum



John H. Rutherford



Bradley Byrne



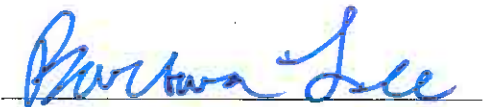
Rick Larsen



Elijah E. Cummings



Mike Quigley



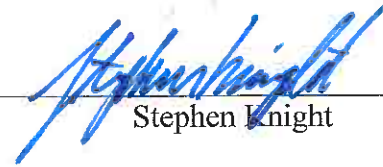
Barbara Lee



David Rouzer



Anthony G. Brown



Stephen Knight



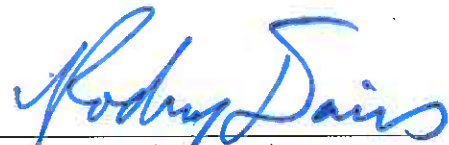
Mike Bost



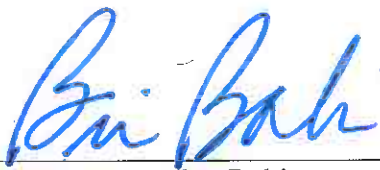
Debbie Dingell



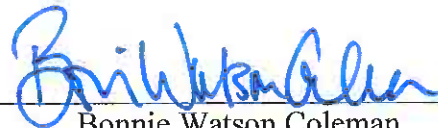
Mark DeSaunier



Rodney Davis



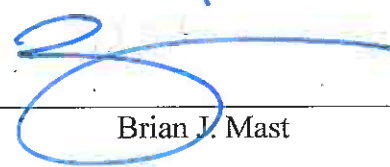
Brian Babin



Bonnie Watson Coleman



J. Luis Correa



Brian J. Mast



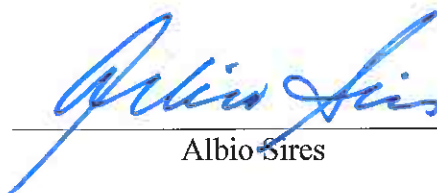
A. Donald McEachin



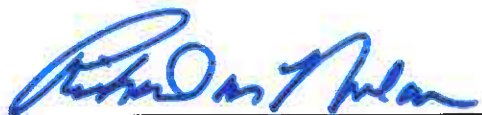
Michael R. Turner



Mark Pocan



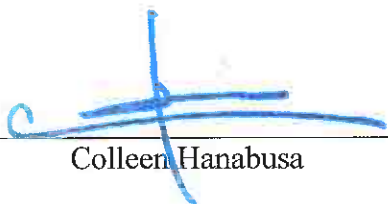
Albio Sires



Richard M. Nolan



Grace F. Napolitano



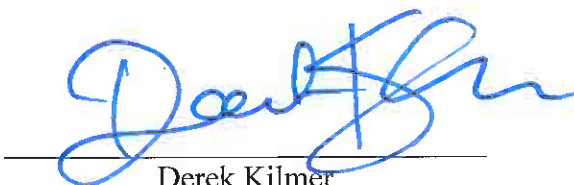
Colleen Hanabusa



Doug LaMalfa



Joe Courtney



Derek Kilmer



Robert J. Wittman



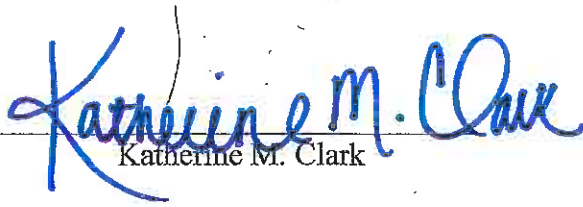
C. A. Dutch Ruppersberger

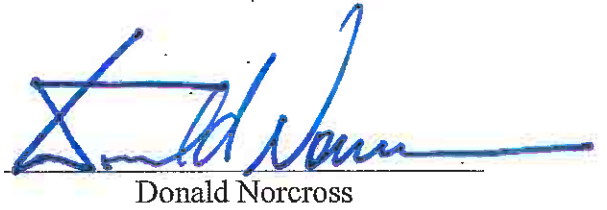


Chellie Pingree



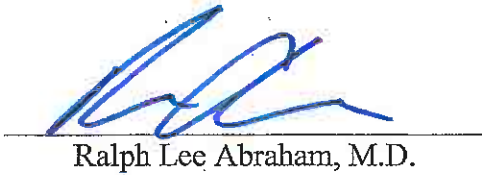
Peter A. DeFazio


Katherine M. Clark


Donald Norcross

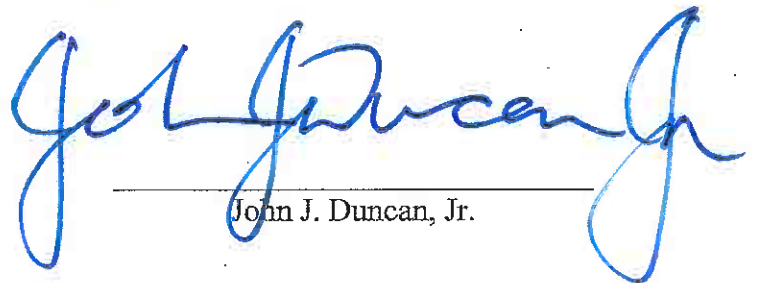

Lucille Roybal-Allard


Rosa L. DeLauro

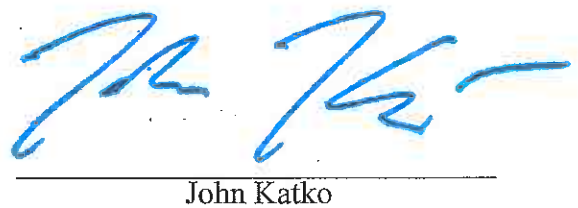

Ralph Lee Abraham, M.D.


Stephen F. Lynch


Val Butler Demings


John J. Duncan, Jr.


Mike Rogers


John Katko