

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 4, 2019

The Honorable David Price, Chairman
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban
Development, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban
Development, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Price and Ranking Member Diaz-Balart:

Consistent with the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2019 now in law (P.L. 116-6), we are writing to request that \$300,000,000 for the Maritime Security Program (MSP) be included when you develop your fiscal year 2020 transportation appropriations bill. Additionally, MSP is a defense spending element governed by the Budget Control Act of 2011 (P.L. 112-25) and the only defense element appropriated in the Transportation Appropriations bill. We also request that a \$300,000,000 defense 302(b) allocation be provided to the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee to ensure sufficient funding for MSP. We previously authorized \$300,000,000 in fiscal year 2020 for MSP in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2016 (P.L. 114-113).

MSP is a vital component of our military strategic sealift and global response capability. It is designed to ensure that the United States has the U.S.-flag commercial sealift capability and trained U.S. citizen merchant mariners available in times of war or national emergencies. MSP also ensures that the U.S. can provide our troops overseas with the supplies and equipment necessary to do their jobs on behalf of our nation.

In recent testimony, General Stephen Lyons, Commander, United States Transportation Command, stated, “the U.S. has long been a maritime nation. I believe it is critically important to maintain a viable U.S. flagged sealift capability to support DoD needs. The vessels within the VISA and the Maritime Security Program (MSP) provide approximately twenty-five percent of the Department’s force deployment capacity, and the majority of its sustainment capacity. Additionally, our commercial sealift partners maintain a pool of trained and ready U.S. Merchant Mariners needed to crew the organic U.S. Navy strategic sealift fleet when it transitions from reduced operating status to fully operational status.”

Equally important, MSP is a public-private partnership between the U.S. government and the U.S.-flag shipping industry whereby the Department of Defense (DOD) is provided assured access to privately-owned commercial shipping assets, related global intermodal systems, and the active pool of U.S citizen mariners necessary to support America's defense objectives around the world. This cost-effective program utilizes existing U.S. maritime private sector capabilities at a fraction of the cost of what it would take if the Federal government were to replicate the vessel capacity and global intermodal systems made available to DOD by MSP contractors who continuously develop and maintain modern logistics systems for commercial and defense purposes. The cost to the Federal government of replicating just the vessel capacity is estimated at \$13 billion. The United States Transportation Command has estimated an additional cost of \$52 billion to replicate the global intermodal system that is made available to the DOD by MSP participants. In contrast, the MSP, at the funding level authorized by Public Law 114-113, will provide DOD with U.S.-flag, U.S. crewed militarily-useful commercial vessels and worldwide logistics systems at a fraction of the estimated \$65 billion it would cost the Federal government to do this job itself.

Since 2009, privately-owned U.S.-flag commercial vessels and their civilian U.S. citizen crews have transported more than 90 percent of the sustainment cargo needed to support U.S. military operations and rebuilding programs in Iraq and Afghanistan. Significantly, U.S.-flag vessels enrolled in MSP carried 99 percent of these cargoes. Without a viable U.S.-flag commercial fleet and the American merchant mariners this fleet supports, the United States would be unable to deploy its military forces on a global basis and to deliver the supplies and equipment American troops need to do their job on behalf of the American people.

In 2018, Secretary of Defense James Mattis affirmed the importance of the U.S. flag fleet and merchant mariners. He said "As small as our Merchant Marine may be today, it is absolutely essential. It's in every war plan that I review, I guarantee you. Because you're going to be the fourth arm of the defense. You're going to sustain our allies and fuel our ships and ferry our warriors."

For these reasons, we urge you to appropriate \$300,000,000 for the Maritime Security Program in fiscal year 2020.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,


JOE COURTNEY
Member of Congress


ROB WITTMAN
Member of Congress


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