



July 17, 2020

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

Dear Madam Speaker:

On behalf of the undersigned American maritime labor organizations we urge you to include emergency funding for the Maritime Security Program (MSP) in the next COVID-19 response legislation. The worldwide coronavirus pandemic is threatening the continued operation of the U.S.-flag maritime security fleet and the jobs of the American maritime workers we represent. The operation of this fleet provides employment for a mariner base of approximately 2,400 American mariners.

COVID-19 is putting at risk the ongoing ability of our industry to provide the sealift readiness capability relied upon by the Department of Defense to support American troops deployed throughout the world. Without this readiness capability the Department of Defense would be forced to entrust the security of our Nation and the safety of American troops to the whims of foreign shipping interests and foreign crews who may not share America's foreign policy and defense objectives.

The importance of this commercial sealift readiness capability was reaffirmed in a letter to Congress from General Stephen R. Lyons, Commander, United States Transportation Command on May 15, 2020. In it, General Lyons noted that the "U.S.-flagged sealift industry is vital to national defense as it enables the Department of Defense to deploy and sustain forces on U.S. vessels crewed by U.S. merchant mariners." He went on to warn of the danger posed by COVID-19 to our fleet and to the capability it provides.

Responding to this concern, the House Committee on Armed Services included in HR 6395, the defense authorizations legislation for FY'21, an authorization for an additional \$180 million in emergency funding for the Maritime Security Program. This emergency funding assistance will help mitigate the impact of the coronavirus on the U.S.-flag fleet, the U.S. citizen merchant mariners who have been recognized as part of America's essential workforce, and the commercial sealift capability provided by our industry under the Maritime Security Program. It will mean that MSP vessels, even those that may be laid-up as a result of COVID-19, will be maintained in the state of readiness needed by the Department of Defense and that their civilian American merchant mariners who crew these vessels will continue to remain employed.

Through this emergency funding for the Maritime Security Program, Congress can ensure that America's essential maritime workforce will remain employed as our nation continues to respond to the coronavirus. We urge that you stand with America's maritime workers and provide \$180 million in emergency funding for the Maritime Security Program in the next COVID-19 response legislation as authorized by the Committee on Armed Services.

Regards,

Marshall Ainley
President
Marine Engineers' Beneficial Association

Dave Connolly
President
Sailors' Union of the Pacific

Paul Doell
President
American Maritime Officers

Don Marcus
President
International Organization of Masters,
& Pilots

Anthony Poplawski
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Marine Firemen, Oilers, Watertenders
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Michael Sacco
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Seafarers International Union