

Congress of the United States  
Washington, DC 20515

September 15, 2020

The Honorable James Inhofe  
Chairman  
Senate Armed Services Committee  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Adam Smith  
Chairman  
House Armed Services Committee  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jack Reed  
Ranking Member  
Senate Armed Services Committee  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mac Thornberry  
Ranking Member  
House Armed Services Committee  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Smith, Chairman Inhofe, Ranking Member Thornberry, and Ranking Member Reed:

As you work to finalize a conference agreement on the Fiscal Year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), we write to convey our strong support for retaining section 3511 of H.R. 6395, the William M. Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021. This provision would authorize the establishment of a tanker security program comprised of ten privately-owned, militarily-useful U.S.-flag product tankers crewed by licensed and unlicensed American merchant mariners.

We are deeply concerned about the decline in the number of militarily-useful commercial vessels operating under the U.S. flag and, consequently, in the number of trained and qualified American merchant mariners available to crew the vessels needed by the Department of Defense to protect America's interests and to support American troops deployed around the world. A tanker security program as passed in H.R. 6395 would begin to rectify this situation, adding additional commercial vessels to the U.S.-flag fleet and creating new jobs for American mariners. This program, modeled after the successful and cost-efficient Maritime Security Program, represents an important maritime policy initiative not only for the maritime workforce but for our nation's commercial sealift readiness capability.

Significantly, Lieutenant General, USMC, John Broadmeadow, Deputy Commander, United States Transportation Command, told Congress last year that "a 10-tanker program will be a welcome start to begin to address the gap in U.S.-flagged bulk fuel delivery."

In short, establishing a tanker security fleet would begin to reduce our military's reliance on foreign flag vessels by ensuring that a greater portion of the fuel needed by the Department of Defense is transported by American mariners on U.S. flag vessels. It would not promote or expand the production of petroleum products but would instead begin to end America's almost total reliance on foreign flag of convenience vessels to meet the energy needs of the Department of Defense at sea and around the world.

We urge that the FY 2021 conference agreement retain section 3511 of H.R. 6395.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



**Alan Lowenthal**  
Member of Congress



**Christopher H. Smith**  
Member of Congress

**Brian Babin, D.D.S.**  
Member of Congress

**Don Bacon**  
Member of Congress

**Donald S. Beyer Jr.**  
Member of Congress

**Mike Bost**  
Member of Congress

**Anthony Brindisi**  
Member of Congress

**Anthony G. Brown**  
Member of Congress

**Julia Brownley**  
Member of Congress

**Bradley Byrne**  
Member of Congress

**Salud Carbajal**  
Member of Congress

**André Carson**  
Member of Congress

**Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.**  
Member of Congress

**Brian Fitzpatrick**  
Member of Congress

**John Garamendi**  
Member of Congress

**Bob Gibbs**  
Member of Congress

**Jared Golden**  
Member of Congress

**Brian Higgins**  
Member of Congress

**Andy Kim**  
Member of Congress

**Peter King**  
Member of Congress

**Elaine G. Luria**  
Member of Congress

**David B. McKinley, P.E.**  
Member of Congress

**Carol D. Miller**  
Member of Congress

**Donald Norcross**  
Member of Congress

**Chris Pappas**  
Member of Congress

**David Price**  
Member of Congress

**Max Rose**  
Member of Congress

**Tim Ryan**  
Member of Congress

**Linda T. Sánchez**  
Member of Congress

**Brad Sherman**  
Member of Congress

**Thomas R. Suozzi**  
Member of Congress

**Robert J. Wittman**  
Member of Congress

**Don Young**  
Member of Congress

**Peter A. DeFazio**  
Member of Congress