



June 24, 2009

**Support Rep. Cummings' Amendment to Protect U.S-Flag Ships from Piracy**

Dear Representative:

We are writing to express our strong support for an amendment to be offered to HR 2647, the Department of Defense authorization legislation, by Congressman Elijah Cummings. Specifically, this amendment would require the Secretary to provide embarked military personnel to board United States-flagged vessels carrying U.S. government cargo in regions at high risk of piracy.

U.S. mariners working aboard U.S.-flag vessels operating in high-risk regions continue to face an immediate and ongoing threat from international pirates. As our American mariners simply attempt to do their jobs, their lives are in constant peril as these pirates decide when – not if – to take further aggressive action against U.S.-flag ships.

We believe strongly that our government must help protect our U.S.-flag fleet which contributes to the economic, political and military security of the United States. Our country cannot allow pirates to force the U.S.-flag off the high seas or to drive American citizens out of our industry. We further believe that the most effective step that must be taken to prevent aggressive action against U.S.-flag commercial vessels and their crews is for our government to immediately provide U.S.-flag vessels with the force protection necessary to prevent any further acts of piracy. This is precisely what Congressman Cummings' amendment would accomplish. The immediate threat to American vessels and United States citizen crews posed by piracy is real, and action must be taken now to protect U.S.-flag vessels and American mariners.

We ask that you join with Congressman Cummings in support of his amendment to help protect the lives of American mariners working aboard United States-flag vessels operating in pirate-infested waters.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Edward Wytkind', written over a horizontal line.

Edward Wytkind  
President

**Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO**

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