



A bold voice for transportation workers

June 18, 2013

Oppose the Royce-Engel Amendment to the Farm Bill

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO (TTD), I ask that you oppose the Royce-Engel amendment (#55) that will be offered during consideration of the Federal Agriculture Reform and Risk Management Act of 2013. This amendment would allow up to 45% of the funds authorized for the Food for Peace Program to be sent overseas to be used for the purchase of foreign agricultural commodities, foreign shipping services, or any other purpose the recipient of American tax dollars chooses.

The Food for Peace Program is an effective, efficient, accountable, and transparent program that for nearly 60 years has saved lives by sending nutritious U.S. commodities to the neediest people overseas. Since its inception, it has become the principal U.S. government food assistance program, benefitting more than three billion people in more than 150 countries. In fact, the United States provides approximately 60 percent of the world's food aid.

Just as importantly, this program is a key contributor to the U.S. economy and national security. Food for Peace keeps our maritime sector strong by using U.S.-flag vessels and U.S. crews to transport food from American farmers to those in need. The program smartly uses American tax-payer dollars to not only feed the needy, but to strengthen the American maritime and agriculture industries. Food for Peace, as currently constructed, is simply a smart government policy that promotes the American value of generosity while also strengthening our own economy.

Furthermore, the reliable source of cargo provided through the Food for Peace Program helps maintain a strong and viable U.S.-flag fleet that plays an important role in our national security, serving as a naval auxiliary in time of war or national emergency. U.S.-flag ships have delivered the majority of the material to Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom. Since 2009, U.S.-flag vessels have moved more than 90 percent of all the cargoes to Afghanistan and Iraq supporting U.S. and coalition forces. In 2011, then-Commander of the DOD Transportation Command General Duncan McNabb told Congress that "the movement of international food aid has been a major contributor to the cargo we have moved under the cargo preference law that our U.S. commercial sealift industry depends on." He added that "any reductions will have to be offset in other ways to maintain current DOD readiness."

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Edward Wytkind, President / Larry I. Willis, Secretary-Treasurer



To this point, the Navy League of the United States recently stated that “to recreate the capacity it obtains from the U.S.-flag commercial industry, the Department of Defense would have to incur an additional \$9 billion in capital costs and \$1 billion in annual operating costs.” The changes to the Food for Peace program proposed in the Royce-Engel amendment would significantly impact the capabilities of the U.S.-flag fleet, and any savings seen as a result of this amendment would be more than offset in additional DOD expenses needed to expand its own sealift capabilities.

Equally important, denying U.S.-flag vessels this source of government impelled cargo will exacerbate what is already a serious situation affecting our sealift capability. Simply put, notwithstanding what the proponents of this change suggest, losing even one U.S.-flag vessel will cost the maritime industry and our nation the seafaring jobs needed to support the civilian manpower base and to ensure the American people that our country will have the U.S.-flag capability and American mariners needed in time of war or other international emergency to support America’s troops.

To seize nearly half of the Food for Peace Funds, as the Royce-Engel amendment proposes, and use them to provide cash transfers to organizations abroad, would be to gut the very things that make this program such a success. This amendment would undermine our nation’s maritime and agriculture industries and their workforces, our commercial and military sealift capabilities, and our ability to successfully deliver international aid around the globe.

I urge you to reject the Royce-Engel amendment and uphold a program that provides vital aid to those most in need around the world and supports America’s security and economy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Edward Wytkind', with a stylized, cursive flourish.

Edward Wytkind
President