



A bold voice for transportation workers

April 1, 2014

Vote for the Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Act

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO (TTD), I urge you to support the Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Act of 2014 (H.R. 4005), which is expected to be voted on later today. The bill includes a number of provisions that will strengthen the U.S. maritime industry, promote good and stable jobs in this sector and support military sealift needs.

H.R. 4005 makes a number of improvements to our nation's cargo preference laws that ensure when U.S. government cargo is transported, it is done on U.S.-flag vessels that support U.S. jobs. Section 316 gives the Department of Transportation (DOT) the authority to interpret cargo preference requirements and determine when other government agencies are subject to these rules and ensure compliance. Recently, the Department of Energy circumvented cargo preference laws, resulting in the loss of cargo for U.S.-flag ships. This provision will help put an end to these types of cargo preference evasions and stop the erosion of the U.S.-flag fleet.

Section 318 would restore the long-time U.S.-flag requirements for the Food for Peace program. This program, which has provided food assistance to the world's neediest people for nearly 60 years, is an effective, efficient and transparent program that has saved millions of lives. Unfortunately, a provision was inserted into the conference report for the 2012 surface transportation authorization, without any committee consideration or evaluation, which reduced the requirement for government generated food aid cargo from 75 to 50 percent. This reduction in cargo has resulted in the loss of U.S.-flag ships, which jeopardizes American mariner jobs and our military's sealift capability. Section 318 would restore the cargo preference share to 75 percent and ensure the stability of this important program.

The Coast Guard bill also addresses industry recruitment needs by making it easier for veterans to transition into the U.S.-flag merchant marine. Currently, Coast Guard rules require applicants for U.S. mariner jobs to demonstrate that they have spent at least three months at sea in the last three years. For retiring Navy and Coast Guard personnel, who may not have served at sea on their last tour of duty but are otherwise qualified to become a marine officer, this is a significant impediment. Section 309 addresses this problem by more effectively counting time served in the military in order to qualify for mariner jobs.

Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO

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



Finally, the bill contains a provision to document the potential maritime job opportunities for American workers in the emerging export market for liquefied natural gas (LNG). Specifically, section 320 would require the GAO to determine the number of jobs that would be created if LNG exports were transported by U.S.-flag vessels. Natural gas is a strategic natural resource supported by taxpayer subsidy and, to the extent our country seeks to export LNG, it should be done to build the U.S. economy by supporting American mariners.

Support for the maritime industry helps sustain hundreds of thousands of jobs, advances a sophisticated international trade and humanitarian aid network and bolsters our armed forces. H.R. 4005 helps advance these objectives by increasing compliance with maritime laws, supporting U.S. jobs and helping develop strategic growth in this sector. Accordingly, I urge you to vote in favor of this legislation.

Sincerely,

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

Edward Wytkind
President