



A bold voice for transportation workers

April 13, 2018

Urge DOT and DOD to Enforce Existing Shipping Laws

Dear Representative,

On behalf of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO (TTD), I ask you to sign the letter being circulated by Representatives John Garamendi, Duncan Hunter, David Joyce and Cedric Richmond urging the Departments of Defense and Transportation to fully enforce maritime cargo preference laws.

A strong U.S. commercial maritime industry supports thousands of good paying middle class jobs, creates substantial economic benefits to the country, and enhances our national security. Critical to the health of the industry is Ship American, or cargo preference laws which require that a percentage of government-impelled cargo is shipped on U.S.-flag vessels and crewed by skilled American mariners. Unfortunately, federal agencies have too often failed to properly comply with these requirements, which has imperiled U.S. sealift capacity and the jobs of U.S. mariners.

The U.S.-flag merchant marine is vital to American military and humanitarian efforts. Since 2009, more than 90% of the cargo needed to support military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq have been transported by the U.S. commercial sealift industry. The U.S.-flag fleet has also risen to the occasion time and time again to deliver critically needed supplies and aide to natural disaster locations at home and abroad.

Yet today, the fleet is in dire straits, facing a shortfall of approximately 2,000 mariners needed to meet our national defense sealift requirements. One important cause of this decline is that federal agencies continue to evade statutory preference requirements in search of marginal or nonexistent cost-savings. As a result, increasing amounts of American tax-payer dollars are being spent to ship goods on foreign vessels to the detriment of the U.S.-flag fleet. It is time for the federal government to heed the warnings of the maritime community, before irreparable harm is done to our national security, preparedness, and the ability of the industry to support thousands of good paying jobs.

DOT and DOD must strongly enforce cargo preference law in order to continue meeting transportation, humanitarian and national security needs. Further, the Administration should make a firm commitment to the U.S.-flag merchant marine and the cargo preference laws that support it. We urge you to sign the Garamendi, Hunter, Joyce and Richmond letter, and appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Larry I. Willis".

Larry I. Willis
President

Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO

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