



A bold voice for transportation workers

October 25, 2019

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

On behalf of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO (TTD), I express my strenuous opposition to language being considered for inclusion in the FY '20 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) that strips collective bargaining rights from U.S. mariners serving on United States-flag vessels participating in the Maritime Security Program (MSP) operating under an Emergency Preparedness Agreement. As drafted, the proposal would allow an MSP carrier, receiving taxpayer funded stipends, to unilaterally abandon its bargained obligations as it relates to crewing MSP vessels and would allow the Department of Transportation (DOT) to prohibit a labor organization from representing these mariners if the agency decides the union is not adequately acquiescing to the carrier's demands.

This proposal is an egregious assault on the rights of the U.S. maritime personnel who serve on MSP vessels and stand ready to provide critical support in times of peace, war or humanitarian crisis. Giving carriers the right to disregard the terms of collective bargaining agreements whenever it feels so inclined fundamentally undermines the ability of workers to bargain for better wages and conditions. Equally concerning is the unprecedented concept of allowing a federal agency to blacklist a labor organization from representing any workers in a large segment of a

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particular industry. In practice, this would allow MSP employers to convince DOT to sign death warrants to any maritime union with which the MSP carrier has contractual disagreements. If enacted, this proposal would open the door to fill potential crew vacancies through the hiring of foreign maritime personnel. This would be an unacceptable abuse of federal power and little more than congressionally-sanctioned union busting.

The goal of the proposal is transparent. Supporters would like to have the ability to circumvent the well-trained and highly qualified U.S. maritime workforce represented by TTD affiliated seafaring unions and replace them with the cheapest crews available if they do not readily agree to unacceptable collective bargaining demands. The ability to crew the Maritime Security Program fleet, which provides irreplaceable benefits to the nation's surge and sealift capacities, while also acting to maintain the necessary pool of USCG qualified mariners, is far too important to be put in jeopardy by misguided cost cutting that will reduce the efficacy and reliability of the fleet. Any disputes concerning labor unions and their members should continue to be resolved according to the terms of jointly bargained agreements.

Finally, TTD strongly endorses the joint maritime labor letter you have also received, signed by our affiliate unions, the Marine Engineers' Beneficial Association (MEBA), the International Organization of Masters, Mates and Pilots (MM&P), and the Sailors' Union of the Pacific (SUP).

The '20 NDAA offers substantial promise to the domestic maritime sector. An extension of the current MSP authorization, contained in both the House and Senate passed bills is the kind of well-reasoned and forward thinking policy that will allow the maritime industry to maintain its current base of qualified American mariners, while continuing to support our national defense needs for years to come. However, this is not the time to permit toxic proposals that have not been approved or considered by either chamber to disrupt positive progress. As you work through the conference process, we strongly urge you to reject this offensive attack on working people and maritime labor.

We look forward to the passage of final legislation free of this provision.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Larry I. Willis".

Larry I. Willis
President