



A bold voice for transportation workers

March 23, 2023

Support Maritime Security Program Funding in FY'24 THUD Appropriations

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO (TTD), and the many maritime workers that we represent. I urge you to sign the bipartisan Dear Colleague letter being circulated by Representatives Joe Courtney (D-CT), Robert Wittman (R-VA), and Trent Kelly (R-MS) requesting the fully authorized level of \$318,000,000 for the Maritime Security Program (MSP) in the FY 2024 Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development appropriations bill.

The Maritime Security Program is an essential component of our military sealift capability because it guarantees that trained U.S. citizen mariners will be available in times of crisis or disaster. The program provides a stipend to commercial shipping companies to enable them to continue sailing U.S.-flag vessels, at a fraction of the cost it would take the federal government to replicate similar maritime shipping capacity. The dual public health and global security crises caused by COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine are a meaningful reminder that the United States should be in control of our commercial goods, energy production, and cargo transportation needs.

This capacity is indispensable to both our security and humanitarian efforts, but it is also a key element in promoting good middle-class jobs in the maritime sector. In a world without a U.S. fleet, jobs currently performed by U.S. mariners would be outsourced to countries without labor and safety protections, where mariners work under poor conditions for little pay. MSP helps to ensure that the U.S. mariner pool remains robust, and that our nation will be able to preserve the existence of a domestic maritime industry and the substantial economic benefits it imparts.

For these reasons, we urge you to sign the Courtney-Wittman-Kelly FY'24 MSP appropriations letter, which requests full funding of the program to provide the necessary support for our military sealift capacity and the U.S. commercial maritime sector.

Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO

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Greg Regan, President / Shari Semelsberger, Secretary-Treasurer



Sign-on is due by Tuesday, March 28, and please see staff contacts and text of the letter below.

Sean Falvey on Rep. Courtney's staff at Sean.Falvey@mail.house.gov

Hallie Coyne on Rep. Wittman's staff at Hallie.Coyne@mail.house.gov

Reed Craddock on Rep. Kelly's staff at Reed.Craddock@mail.house.gov

Thank you for your consideration of this important request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Greg Regan", written over a circular stamp or seal.

Greg Regan
President

Dear Colleague,

Since 1996, the Maritime Security Program (MSP) has served as a vital component of U.S. military strategic sealift and global response capability. The program is designed to ensure that the United States has access to a fleet of militarily-useful commercial shipping vessels and trained U.S. citizen merchant mariners available in times of war or national emergencies. We request your support for full funding of this program.

Since 2009, privately-owned U.S.-flag commercial vessels and their civilian U.S. citizen crews have transported more than 90 percent of the sustainment cargo needed to support U.S. military operations and rebuilding programs in Iraq and Afghanistan. Significantly, U.S.-flag vessels enrolled in MSP carried 99 percent of these cargoes. Without a viable U.S.-flag commercial fleet and the American merchant mariners this fleet supports, the United States would be unable to deploy its military forces on a global basis and to deliver the supplies and equipment American troops need to do their job on behalf of the American people.

Congress authorized the Maritime Security Program at \$314 million in FY21, as part of the FY20 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) (P.L. 116-92) that provided a long-term reauthorization for the program. In the FY23 Omnibus, Congress fully funded the program by appropriating \$318 million to continue its support for the critical mission of the Maritime Security Program. Since the program's authorization, senior military leaders have given their full support, including by current United States Transportation Command Commander, General Jacqueline Van Ovost, stating that "the Maritime Security program gives us that guaranteed access, and it is a great value for the dollar to ensure that we can have US-flagged, US-crewed ships available to support us into the future." Without access to an on-call commercial fleet through MSP, Military Sealift Command has estimated that replicating the vessel capacity with a government-owned and operated fleet would cost approximately \$13 billion.

Please join our bipartisan letter urging the Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies to appropriate \$318 million for the Maritime Security Program in FY24, as authorized by the FY20 NDAA.

Sincerely,

JOE COURTNEY

Ranking Member

House Armed Services Subcommittee on Seapower and Projection Forces

TRENT KELLY

Chairman

House Armed Services Subcommittee on Seapower and Projection Forces

ROB WITTMAN

Chairman

House Armed Services Subcommittee on Tactical Air and Land Forces