



## **Oppose Senator Risch Amendment 265 to the NDAA and Protect U.S. Maritime Workers**

Jul 17, 2023

Dear Senator,

On behalf of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO (TTD), representing 37 labor unions across all modes of transportation, we urge you to oppose Senate Amendment 265, led by Senator Risch, that would eliminate Ship American “cargo preference” rules that are essential to our U.S. Merchant Marine and U.S.-flag shipping industry. This unnecessary amendment would waive a requirement that 50% of U.S. food-aid exports must be shipped on U.S.-flagged ships, thereby waiving Ship American rules worldwide to the detriment of the U.S. maritime workforce. To be clear, this means that the federal government would cede U.S. food aid and shipping interests to foreign flag ships by eliminating 100% of the U.S. ships that are available to transport food-aid at fair and reasonable rates.

This amendment is totally unnecessary, as existing law currently allows for the waiver of Ship American preference if U.S.-flag vessels are not available at fair and reasonable rates. More importantly, cargo preference statutes and other U.S.-flag shipping requirements are essential to maintaining the U.S.-flag fleet. By requiring that government-financed cargoes move on U.S.-flag vessels, we can retain a pool of highly-trained, qualified, and loyal civilian mariners who stand ready to meet our military and humanitarian needs while simultaneously operating in the commercial-flag industry.

The reduction of cargo would only further endanger the jobs of civilian merchant mariners creating the distinct possibility that there will not be enough mariners to meet military surge and sustainment requirements for future military conflicts. When foreign flag shipping companies are currently making record profits amidst global supply chain disruptions, now is not the time to weaken critical policies that would come at the expense of American businesses and working families.

We urge you to oppose this unnecessary amendment that would use humanitarian conflicts to exploit American mariner jobs. Instead, we should support policies that strengthen cargo preference laws, which support our national security, preparedness for humanitarian missions, and good middle-class jobs.

Sincerely,

Greg Regan  
President  
Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO