



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

May 12, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi and Leaders Schumer and McCarthy:

As you negotiate further legislation in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we write to request assistance for the United States-flagged shipping industry, its mariners and shoreside employees involved in the Maritime Security Program (MSP).

As you know, MSP is a public-private partnership between the U.S. government and the U.S.-flagged shipping industry whereby the Department of Defense has access to privately-owned commercial shipping assets, intermodal systems, and the active pool of U.S. citizen mariners necessary to support America's defense objectives around the world. This program is vital to our military strategic sealift and global response capability and is designed to ensure that the United States has U.S.-flagged commercial sealift capability and trained U.S. citizen merchant mariners available in times of war or national emergencies.

For this program to be effective, the United States needs not only a robust defense base, but also a healthy commercial maritime industry. The current COVID-19 pandemic has been particularly harsh to this sector, with seagoing cargo and commercial maritime trade down significantly and forecasted to remain depressed. With the immediate future in question, industry faces the protracted lay-up of their ships and layoff of their workforce until demand increases. Coupled with the already critical shortfall of U.S.-trained and licensed merchant mariners and the risk of them permanently leaving the industry, our nation's sealift is at significant risk.

To that end, we urge you to include \$220 million, approximately \$1.83M for each MSP-enrolled vessel for both FY 2020 and 2021, in the next COVID-19 response package. This will provide critical support for each vessel in the program to ensure full operational and crew readiness to support military requirements. We also urge that any new COVID relief legislation include

provisions temporarily suspending the requirement that MSP-enrolled vessels operate for a minimum 320 days in the year, while maintaining full employment, given the decline in commercial cargo volume and demand.

This assistance will help stabilize the U.S.-flagged maritime industry during turbulent and challenging economic times and ensure that the militarily-useful commercial vessels enrolled in the MSP and their U.S. citizen crews remain in a state of operational readiness available to provide capability for our nation.

We appreciate your attention to this matter. Thank you for your service and leadership during this national crisis.

Sincerely,



JOE COURTNEY
Member of Congress



ROB WITTMAN
Member of Congress



PETER DEFAZIO
Member of Congress



SEAN PATRICK MALONEY
Member of Congress

This letter to Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi and Leaders Schumer and McCarthy is sent on behalf of the following members of the United States House of Representatives:

Brian Babin	Brian Higgins	Scott Peters
Don Bacon	Jared Huffman	Mike Quigley
Mike Bost	Pramila Jayapal	Cedric L. Richmond
Anthony G. Brown	John Katko	David Rouzer
Julia Brownley	William R. Keating	C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger
Cheri Bustos	Derek Kilmer	Michael F.Q. San Nicolas
Bradley Byrne	Peter T. King	Linda T. Sánchez
Salud Carbajal	Rick Larsen	Mikie Sherrill
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Paul Cook	Sheila Jackson Lee	Adam Smith
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Suzan DelBene	David B. McKinley, P.E.	Jackie Speier
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Ted Deutch	Carol D. Miller	Eric Swalwell
Adriano Espaillat	Seth Moulton	Bennie G. Thompson
Brian Fitzpatrick	Donald Norcross	David Trone
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