
LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

AUGUST 2021



House Advances ‘Minibus’ Spending Package, Includes Key Maritime Priorities

On July 29, the House of Representatives passed a ‘minibus’ spending package by a vote of 219-208. The comprehensive appropriations bill includes full funding for both the Maritime Security Program (MSP) at \$318 million and the newly established Tanker Security Program (TSP) at \$60 million for Fiscal Year 2022. The M.E.B.A. has played an active role engaging bipartisan lawmakers about the importance of growing a viable U.S. flag international fleet. In a letter sent to congressional leaders, maritime union presidents noted “...*our industry is experiencing a dangerous decline in the number of trained and qualified American merchant mariners available to crew the surge and sustainment vessels needed by the Department of Defense to protect America’s interests and to support American troops deployed around the world. In response, Congress has reaffirmed its strong support for the Maritime Security Program and included provisions in Public Law 116-283 that establish a much-needed tanker security fleet modeled after the Maritime Security Program and its maritime security fleet.*” Furthermore, full funding for MSP and TSP were included in President Biden’s recent White House budget request to Congress, and a recently released unclassified report by the U.S. Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM) also identifies one key solution to “mitigate risk and uncertainty [and to] reduce the US-flag tanker gap and the risk of reliance on foreign-flag tankers” is to implement the Tanker Security Program. The passage of this spending package represents a critically important step toward making the establishment of a Tanker Security Fleet a reality.

USA Maritime Coalition Urges Congress to Support Cargo Preference Proposals in Infrastructure Negotiations

In a July 22 letter, the USA Maritime coalition, a working group comprised of U.S. flag shipping companies, maritime trade associations, and labor unions including the M.E.B.A., called for Congress to consider including legislative proposals to enhance U.S. cargo preference requirements in any future infrastructure programs enacted into law. Specifically, the letter calls for ensuring that any goods produced by taxpayer dollars in support of infrastructure investments utilize U.S.-flag ships when possible and calls for repealing statutory changes in 2012 that significantly reduced the percentage of U.S. food aid that must be shipped on U.S.-flag vessels from 75% to 50%. The letter states, “By repealing changes made....and potentially increasing cargo preference requirements to 100%, Congress can undo the damage caused by MAP-21 while working to strengthen and expand the U.S.-flag international fleet.” The letter comes after the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued a memo in June regarding the newly-established Made in America Office (MIAO) that will oversee Buy American and Ship American waivers in an effort to “strengthen internal agency waiver review processes, prepare for and support a centralized strategic waiver review process at the MIAO, and increase reliance on domestic manufacturers and domestic vessels.”
