

## **Maritime Security Program Extended For Another Decade**

President Barack Obama's signature on the recently passed 2011 Defense Authorization bill will replenish a vital maritime statute that keeps the Stars and Stripes flying above almost 60 ships.

The Maritime Security Program (MSP) had been due to expire in Fiscal Year 2015, but the newly passed DOD bill re-upped the MSP for another decade thanks to a longtime friend of the industry. In late Spring, Armed Services Chairman Ike Skelton (D-MO) inserted a provision into the Defense bill extending the MSP through FY 2025. Since then, Skelton lost his bid for an 18<sup>th</sup> Congressional term in November. As his final days in Congress approached before the changeover, Skelton was active in the lame duck Congressional session in shepherding the DOD bill toward final passage while ensuring that the MSP provision remained intact.

As you know, the MSP maintains a modern U.S.-flag fleet providing military access to vessels and vessel capacity, as well as a total global, intermodal transportation network. This network includes not only vessels, but logistics management services, infrastructure, terminal facilities and U.S. citizen merchant mariners to crew the government owned/controlled and commercial fleets.

The passing of this bill was made possible by the hard work of M.E.B.A. legislative staff, key industry people, and Members of Congress.

Though the Program has been extended to FY 2025, the money to fund the MSP must still be appropriated. M.E.B.A. will be extremely active in 2011 and beyond in ensuring the success of this important program.