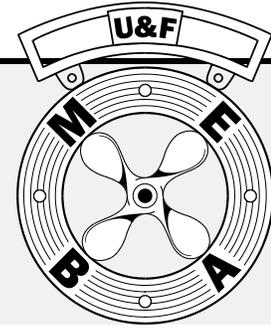


LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

FEBRUARY 2018



M.E.B.A. Secretary-Treasurer Bill Van Loo was one of eight witnesses testifying before a Congressional Subcommittee recently about the capabilities and needs of the U.S.-flag maritime industry. Rep. Duncan Hunter (R-CA), Chairman of the Coast Guard & Maritime Transportation Subcommittee (part of the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee) oversaw the hearing that explored various facets of the industry aimed at ensuring a viable U.S.-flag Merchant Marine thus aiding our nation's economy and national security.

Van Loo, speaking on behalf of the M.E.B.A., AMO, MM&P and SIU, talked about the erosion of the U.S.-flag Merchant Marine and the associated mariner base. He stressed that Members of Congress should reassert their support for key maritime statutes and adopt new initiatives to help expand the U.S.-flag fleet – which in turn would swell the ranks of American mariners. “In order to remain available in times of war and to support our Nation’s economic security, the U.S.-flag Merchant Marine must be supported during times of peace,” he testified. He called for a “coordinated approach to a national maritime policy that starts with ensuring a steady stream of cargo.” With a massive infrastructure spending bill inching forward, he told the subcommittee the “renewal of the U.S. Merchant Marine” needs to be part of the discussions. Van Loo urged that lawmakers and the Administration put a priority on incentivizing commercial cargoes onboard U.S.-flag ships while noting that the U.S.-flag currently accounts for only 2% of the global U.S. trade. “One way this can be accomplished is through the negotiation of bilateral shipping agreements. Congress should give the Administration whatever additional authority it needs to negotiate meaningful bilateral cargo sharing agreements with America’s trading partners to provide U.S.-flag vessels with a greater share of our foreign trade.” “It is very simple,” Van Loo said. “Without cargo, our ships do not sail and our mariners do not stand by.”

Further emphasis on the issues important to us was provided by USA Maritime, represented through testimony delivered by American Roll-On Roll-Off Carrier (ARC) President Eric Ebeling. USA Maritime is a coalition of maritime unions, associations and shipping companies – including the M.E.B.A. and American Maritime Congress – fighting for the U.S. Merchant Marine.

He offered three suggestions to stave off the precipitous decline of available government preference cargoes including “faithful execution” of strengthened cargo preference enforcement tools. He also called for “100% of all government-owned or financed cargoes to move on U.S.-flag ships.” In addition, he stressed that the Export-Import Bank must be afforded a quorum so that it can return to full functioning power. Importantly, a portion of cargo generated by the Bank is required to be transported aboard U.S.-flag ships and only U.S. vessels can be used for Bank transactions above \$20 million.

You can view the prepared witness testimonies and also watch the hearing by visiting the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/maritimehearing>