



May 26, 2020

President Marshal Ainley  
Secretary Treasurer Bill Van Loo  
Marine Engineers Beneficial Association  
444 North Capitol Street Northwest, Suite 800  
Washington, DC 20001

Dear President Ainley and Secretary Treasurer Van Loo:

I hope you and your members are staying safe and healthy during this unprecedented moment. I know your members are working around the clock during this pandemic to deliver the essential supplies our communities need. Maritime labor has always worked through peace and war and deserves our nation's full support. As a lifelong advocate for working families and unions, I write to assure you of my strong and unwavering support for the Marine Engineers Beneficial Association, its members, and the U.S.-flag Merchant Marine fleet.

Labor unions built the middle class and the middle class built this country. The basic building blocks of a good life—middle-class jobs at union wages, a 40-hour work week, health insurance, retirement benefits, a voice in the workplace—resulted from workers who organized unions and fought for worker protections. This is the history of the Marine Engineers Beneficial Association. And at a time when our country is facing unprecedented challenges, our economic future today depends on unions like yours—just as it did in the past.

Just as unions are essential to the middle class, the U.S.-flag Merchant Marine fleet and the men and women who operate U.S.-flag ships are crucial to America's national security, our international trade relationships, and economic development. For this reason, I have been a consistent and strong advocate for the Jones Act and its mandate that only U.S.-flag vessels carry cargo in the coastwise trade. As President, I will continue my strong support for the Jones Act.

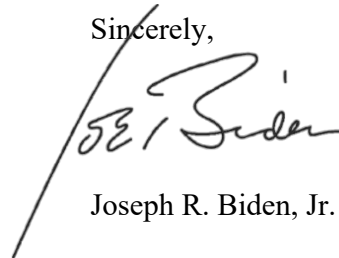
My support for the U.S.-flag merchant fleet does not end with the Jones Act. I understand that merchant ships do not sail, and U.S. merchant mariners do not work, unless they have cargo to carry. I strongly support America's cargo preference laws and the Cargo Preference Act. Americans have big hearts while also caring deeply about defending democracy and America's allies around the world. The surest expression of America's commitment to these values is to ensure that the U.S. flag flies over the U.S.-built and U.S.-crewed vessels that are delivering either humanitarian aid or military supplies to countries around the world. Similarly, I understand that exporting American-made goods to countries around the world is an effective strategy for increasing the number of middle-class jobs. That's one reason why I strongly support the extended reauthorization of the Export-Import Bank and will ensure that it is able to operate at all times with a fully-staffed board of directors committed to carrying out its mission. Exports funded by the Export-Import Bank should be shipped on U.S.-flag vessels. I will ensure this American cargo continues to move.

The Maritime Security Program is essential to America's national defense and it has my strong support. I understand that your members and the ships they sail are an integrated and necessary part of our country's military readiness. As a U.S. Senator, I was proud to support the creation of the MSP in 1996 to enact the Maritime Security Act. As President, I will support full funding of the MSP's existing operating agreements, but I will go further: I will propose that Congress authorize and appropriate funds to increase the number of ships in the MSP fleet. We must have a modern fleet to help us address modern threats in several regions of the world. The MSP must be secured if America is going to remain secure.

You should have leaders in the U.S. Maritime Administration and throughout the Department of Transportation, as well as in the U.S. Department of Defense, with whom you can work effectively. I will seek to appoint a Secretary of Transportation and a Maritime Administrator who appreciate the vital role of the U.S.-flag fleet in our economy and our national defense. They will also share my view that we have a moral obligation to rebuild the middle class—when the middle class does well, the rich do very well, the poor have a way up, and our country is more stable and prosperous. We'll get it done, in part, by investing in the U.S.-flag Merchant Marine and ensuring labor has a seat at the table when issues arise that affect the U.S.-flag fleet. You've fought hard, with my support, to make your members' jobs into good-quality middle-class jobs. I want you to know that I will continue the fight alongside you when I am in the White House. These are principles I've embraced my entire career and they're fundamental to my vision for a stronger, more inclusive middle class.

I'm proud to have stood with you in the past and it would be an honor to have your support in the upcoming election. If I win the nomination and make it to the White House, I promise you will have no stronger partner or advocate.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe Biden". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "J".

Joseph R. Biden, Jr.