



A bold voice for transportation workers

CONGRESS MUST APPROPRIATE FUNDS FOR THE TANKER SECURITY PROGRAM TO SUPPORT THE U.S. MARITIME INDUSTRY AND OUR NATIONAL SECURITY

In response to the decline of U.S. flag vessels available to protect America's interests at home and around the globe, Congress established the Tanker Security Program (TSP), which would reinforce our current tanker fleet, lower our reliance on foreign flag vessels, and create new, good jobs for American workers. TSP was authorized by Congress in the FY2021 National Defense Authorization Act but the program has still not been appropriated. We therefore call on Congress to fully fund the Tanker Security Program in FY2022 to utilize a fleet of U.S. flag ships during a national crisis, strengthen our national defense, and support the U.S. Maritime industry and its workforce.

Throughout our nation's history, the U.S. maritime industry has played a central role in America's economic growth, military preparedness, national security, and disaster relief efforts. Implementing strong federal maritime programs and policies that support a U.S.-Flag fleet and U.S. mariners is essential to creating good jobs in this sector, while allowing the federal government to respond to important issues related to our national defense and waterborne commerce. The TSP would be one of the strongest tools at the federal government's disposal to not only create and sustain jobs, but also provide needed capacity and support U.S. national interests. We cannot achieve these goals, however, unless appropriators fully fund the program.

The Tanker Security Program would operate similarly to the Maritime Security Program (MSP) by providing a stipend for a fleet of 10 tanker vessels in exchange for the commitment that these vessels will be available to the Department of Defense during a conflict or national emergency. Importantly, these tankers would be U.S. flagged, owned, and operated by licensed and unlicensed American maritime crews with necessary labor protections and safe working environments.

From a safety and national security perspective, the need for this program could not be more clear. Over the last few years, the federal government received reports and testimony from various experts about the dire need to increase its U.S.-flag tanker fleet due to the current fleet's size and the lack of ability to address strategic sealift gaps. In February 2020, the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments released a report noting that the Department of Defense is 76 fuel tankers short to meet surge sealift requirements in a time of need. In addition, in 2019, while serving as deputy commander of the U.S. Transportation Command, Lt. Gen. John Broadmeadow (USMC), told Congress that "a 10-tanker program will be a welcome start to begin to address the gap in U.S.-flagged bulk fuel delivery."

That same year, in the FY2020 National Defense Authorization Act, Congress included a provision that required the Department of Defense, and the Department of Transportation, to report on the current capacity of the U.S.-Flag tanker fleet to meet wartime requirements. That report by the U.S. Transportation Command was released earlier this year (2021) and has further underscored TSP as a solution to lower reliance on foreign-flag tankers and improve military readiness for efficient refueling and petroleum transport around the world. It also noted that the current U.S. Flagged tanker fleet is inadequate and leaves strategic gaps in our national defense efforts.

Just last year, in the FY2021 National Defense Authorization Act, Congress finally authorized funding for the Tanker Security Fleet Program to provide \$6M per tanker per year up to 10 vessels (\$60 million in FY2022) in exchange for access to tankers by the Department of Defense during wartime or a national emergency.

In addition to appropriating funds for the Tanker Security Program, Congress and the administration must continue to support fundamental legislation like the Jones Act, Cargo Preference laws, and the Maritime Security Program that uplift the U.S. Maritime industry and increase the number of U.S.-flag vessels to address the shortfall in American maritime manpower.

To further halt and reverse the downward trend in the number of vessels operating under the U.S.-flag and the outsourcing of American maritime jobs we urge the Administration to consider strong, positive and innovative actions to develop and implement meaningful and effective programs and policies that will increase the number of commercially viable U.S.-flag vessels, increase the number of American maritime jobs, and increase the amount of America's foreign trade carried aboard U.S.-flag ships. Such initiatives should include the utilization of Federal tax law to incentivize shippers to utilize U.S.-flag vessels for a greater portion of commercial cargoes, tax and economic policies that encourage rather than discourage investment in the U.S.-flag shipping industry, the negotiation of bilateral shipping and cargo sharing agreements with our trading partners, and policies that include a greater reliance on U.S.-flag vessels as a means to achieve energy efficiency and a cleaner environment. In so doing, we can better guarantee that the United States will have the U.S.-flag ships and American mariners it needs to provide the assured logistics the Department of Defense requires.

Federal support for these policies will maintain the strength of the U.S. maritime industry and ensure qualified American merchant mariners are available to grow our economy, support military efforts, and enhance our national security—a net positive for all Americans.

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