



**R. Christian Johnsen**  
Chair

The Honorable Ann Phillips  
Maritime Administrator  
Maritime Administration  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue S.E.  
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Administrator Phillips:

On behalf of the undersigned United States-flag shipping companies, American maritime labor organizations and related maritime associations belonging to the USA Maritime Coalition, I am writing to convey our appreciation for your efforts in support of our nation's cargo preference laws. As you stated in your testimony before the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure in September 2022: "Cargoes paid for by American taxpayers belong on American Ships. Cargo preference requirements are not just 'Buy America' requirements, they are requirements that also help to strengthen America."

The full application and enforcement of the U.S.-flag cargo preference shipping requirements are critically important to our industry's ability to provide the commercial sealift readiness capability relied upon by the Department of Defense. The repeated failure by Federal agencies and departments to comply with these requirements exacerbate the already serious maritime manpower shortage and further impede our nation's ability to reliably and consistently support American troops deployed overseas. As President Biden has stated: "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."

We are therefore extremely pleased the National Defense Authorization legislation signed by President Biden on December 23, 2022, directs the Maritime Administration to issue, within 270 days, a final rule covering the implementation and enforcement of the cargo preference requirements. This provision makes clear that the Maritime Administration has the authority and responsibility to ensure full compliance with the Ship American cargo preference programs.

The members of USA Maritime encourage the Maritime Administration to move expeditiously and to issue an interim final rule prior to the 270-day deadline and without prior notice and comment. Failure by the government to fully enforce the cargo preference laws of the United States only benefits foreign flag shipping companies, to the detriment of U.S.-flag vessel operators, American merchant mariners, our nation's economic and supply chain security, and the national sealift readiness capabilities that are required by the Department of Defense to deploy and sustain our warfighters.

Cargo Preference  
February 6, 2023

We welcome your commitment to address this issue and to resolve this problem. We stand ready to provide whatever assistance and support you may require.

Sincerely,  
  
R. Christian Johnsen, Chair  
USA Maritime

American Maritime Congress  
American Maritime Officers  
American Maritime Officers Service  
American Roll-on Roll-off Carrier  
American President Lines  
Hapag-Lloyd USA, LLC  
International Organization of Masters, Mates & Pilots  
Keystone Shipping Company  
Liberty Maritime  
Maersk Line, Limited  
Marine Engineers' Beneficial Association  
Maritime Institute for Research and Industrial Development  
Patriot Contract Services  
Sailors' Union of the Pacific  
Schuyler Line Navigation Company  
Seafarers International Union  
Transportation Institute  
US Ocean, LLC  
Waterman Logistics