

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

April 1, 2014

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Before Congress considers fast-track authority for future trade agreements, we ask for your assurance that any trade negotiations under your watch will not jeopardize the future of the U.S. maritime industry, including specifically the Jones Act and related cabotage laws. It is critically important the U.S. ensures that it can maintain, support, and promote a viable U.S. maritime industry for economic, homeland, and national security reasons. As the country considers the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP), the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), and any future trade agreements, we need assurances that under no circumstance will U.S. cabotage laws be considered as a point for negotiation.

As you are well aware, the United States is the greatest maritime nation in the world, a prolific trader with the world's largest access to the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, as well as a highly developed system of intra-country waterways. Accordingly, we have built a maritime industry that not only focuses on efficiency, but also places the utmost importance on the safety and security of our country. Today, the United States continues to rely upon the commercial U.S.-flag ships, American shipyards and American merchant mariners for its military sealift strategy. Current trade agreements protect the United States' rights to maintain and promote a U.S. maritime industry. Future trade agreements must do the same.

Despite a strong U.S. maritime industry, nearly 97% of international trade is carried on foreign flagged vessels. Any change in U.S. cabotage laws, cargo preference laws, or other maritime promotional laws through trade agreements would not only destroy the U.S. maritime industry, but would also risk American jobs in the fields of shipbuilding, ship services and maintenance, and ship operations. Together these industries provide billions of dollars to the national economy and tens of thousands of jobs nationwide. Moreover, America's shipbuilding industry is a strategic national asset for the defense industrial base, and the qualified American seafarers are crucial to the crewing of military and commercial sealift ships. The U.S.-flag fleet also plays a vital role in supporting military sealift, carrying a major portion of the sustainment cargoes in the recent Iraqi and Afghanistan war efforts.

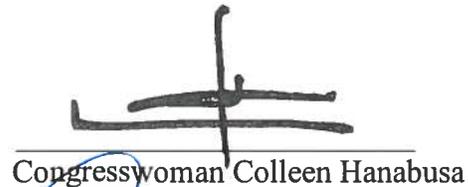
As you are aware, for many years the Jones Act has served as a protection to both our American industries as well as our national security. Because of this important role, it enjoys strong support from the U.S. military, Members of Congress, and every president in modern history. Many members of Congress and even more of our constituents have grave concerns that if granted "fast-track" trade authority, we could potentially succumb to international pressures to eliminate U.S. cabotage and cargo preference laws at the cost of thousands of American jobs and countless risks to national security.

From the founding days of this nation to the recent efforts supporting American warfighters around the globe, the U.S. merchant marine has helped to protect the many freedoms this nation enjoys. For those reasons, we cannot allow foreign nations to undermine U.S. maritime capabilities through trade negotiations. Therefore, we again ask for your solemn assurance that any trade negotiations ongoing or in the future will not jeopardize the Jones Act or cargo preference laws, or generally our nation's ability to maintain and support the U.S. maritime industry.

Sincerely,



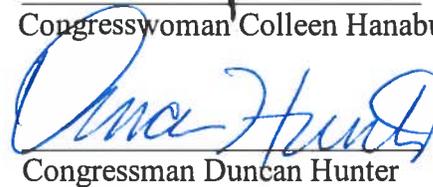
Congressman Steven Palazzo



Congresswoman Colleen Hanabusa



Congressman Rick Larsen



Congressman Duncan Hunter



Congressman John Garamendi