

325 Belle Terre Boulevard
Suite A
LaPlace, Louisiana 70068

September 14, 2015

Joseph Accardo, Jr.
Executive Director
(985) 817-0238
joeaccardo@comcast.net

The Honorable David Vitter
516 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Vitter:

The Ports Association of Louisiana urge your support and co-sponsorship of the Maritime and Energy Workforce Technical Training Enhancement Act, H.R. 2923. This bill would benefit the Louisiana industry through training at Louisiana community and technical colleges.

H.R. 2923 would authorize creation of a new program to support capacity building to address the critical need for trained workers in the maritime and energy industries. This would include awarding grants, and creation of a centers of excellence program in maritime and energy workforce training.

The strength of the United States as a maritime nation is related to the strength of its global, coastal and inland commercial fleet, its ports and intermodal facilities, and the maritime workforce that supports and operates U.S.-flagged vessels. The marine transportation system is a core component of our economic and national security, and it is vital to the growing domestic energy industry. Louisiana community and technical colleges are prominent among the nation's institutions of higher education that have established maritime and energy workforce training.

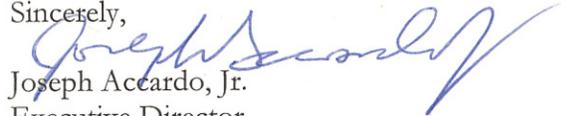
While the maritime workforce has proven to be strong and resilient, there is a need to upgrade the skills and capacity of the industry to ensure the future viability of the Merchant Marine. Jobs in the maritime industry, with a wide range of scope, continue to boom with international activity at seaports and inland ports. These jobs include operating and maintaining vessels, as well as staffing of numerous positions at port facilities. Education and training requirements vary depending on the type of job. Bachelor's degrees are required for marine officers and engineers, but qualification for most maritime employment positions can be obtained through associate degrees.

The Maritime and Energy Workforce Technical Training Enhancement Act would authorize grants to support capacity building in critical maritime training categories, including the following:

- Maritime transportation, logistics, supply chain management, shipbuilding, and ship repair.
- Training for such positions as tankerman, deckhand, able body seaman, firefighting, pilot training, maritime technologies, marine diesel technician, marine gasoline engine technology, marine electrical, marine mechanical, maritime logistics, and maritime welding.

Louisiana industry would benefit from workforce development capacity-building assistance under this proposed legislation. I respectfully urge your support.

Sincerely,


Joseph Accardo, Jr.
Executive Director