

Friends of the Texas A&M Maritime Academy

May 14, 2020

The Honorable John Cornyn
United States Senate
517 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Cornyn:

As members of the maritime industry and industries supported by the maritime industry, we write to thank you for your continued support for and leadership on efforts to secure a new training ship for the Texas A&M Maritime Academy located at Texas A&M University at Galveston. The Texas A&M Maritime Academy, one of our nation's six state maritime academies and the only one in the Gulf Coast region, has provided first class training for merchant mariners and land-based maritime professionals for more than 50 years. From blue water shipping, river borne transportation, and offshore oil and gas production to safe and efficient operation of our nation's ports, Texas A&M Maritime Academy graduates are leading the way.

As you well know, the Texas A&M Maritime Academy has operated without a sufficient training ship for nearly 15 years. We were pleased to see funding included in the president's Fiscal Year 2021 budget request for a fourth National Security Multi-Mission Vessel (NSMV), which will be assigned to the Texas A&M Maritime Academy. Our companies look to the Texas A&M Maritime Academy to produce the highest quality maritime professionals to continue to conduct, and ultimately lead, operations essential to the U.S. maritime economy. This can only be accomplished with the provision of a dedicated, modern, and reliable training ship with sufficient capacity for its 420 cadets to achieve the Coast Guard-required sea time prior to licensing and graduation.

In addition to serving as a first-class training vessel for cadets, the NSMV will be a vital disaster response asset for the Gulf region and nation. Given the circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 global pandemic, the need for all hazards response ships that are capable of both housing first responders and emergency medical facilities is pressing. These ships are capable of being deployed to any metropolitan port on the Gulf Coast within two days, thereby providing a much needed rapid surge capacity.

We stand ready to work with you to support the inclusion of funding for a NSMV for Texas in the Fiscal Year 2021 Department of Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act. Thank you for your support for the maritime industry in Texas, the Gulf region, and the nation.

Sincerely,

Roger Guenther, Executive Director, Port Houston, Houston, Texas
Jason McFarland, President, International Association of Drilling Contractors, Houston, Texas

Chad Burke, President & CEO, Economic Alliance Houston Port Region, Deer Park, Texas
Vinny Pilegge, Chairman, Greater Houston Port Bureau and President, Manchester Terminal LLC,
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Frank Morton, Director, Turn Services, LLC, New Orleans, Louisiana
Thomas A. McQuilling, Chairman & CEO, L&R Midland, Houston, Texas
Capt. RV Sheen, FNI, Vice President, Operations, Ocean Shipholdings, Inc., Houston, Texas
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Tony P. Panagiotareas, Director, Oceanus Maritime Services, LLC, League City, Texas
Charles W. Schwartz, Chairman Emeritus, Texas A&M University Board of Regents, Houston,
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Dan Stabbert, President & CEO, Stabbert Maritime, Seattle, Washington
Steve Hale, CEO, Gulf Copper Manufacturing Corporation, Port Arthur, Texas
Niels A. Aulund, President, International Propeller Club of the U.S., Fairfax, Virginia
Jeffrey G. Sjostrom, President, Galveston Economic Development Partnership, Galveston, Texas
Capt. Robert K. Baker (USN, Ret.), Marine Superintendent, ExxonMobil Refining & Supply Co.,
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Capt. Alex E. Cruz Hernandez, President, Southeast Harbor Pilots, Ponce, Puerto Rico
General William Fraser (USAF, Ret), Commander, U.S. Transportation Command, Garden Ridge,
Texas
Gregory M. Tylawsky, Captain (USMM), San Francisco Bar Pilots, Santa Rosa, California
Capt. Bronson Stubbs, Harbor Pilot, Port of Miami, Miami, Florida
Capt. Michael A. Morris, Past President (Ret.), Houston Pilots Association, Houston Texas
Kenneth Diaz, President, San Juan Bay Pilots Association, San Juan, Puerto Rico
Fr. Sinclair Oubre, Diocesan Director, The Apostleship of the Sea, Port Author, Texas
Pedro F. Rivera, Jr., Maritime Administrator, American Tugs Incorporated, San Juan, Puerto Rico
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Capt. Sam Stephenson, Senior Harbor Pilot, Port Everglades Pilots Association and President
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Rhonda Cummins, Executive Director, Point Comfort Seafarers Center, Point Comfort, Texas

Elizabeth L. Cheney, Chief Operating Officer, Cheney Energy Partners, Houston, Texas
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