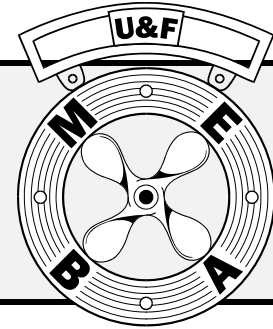


LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

JUNE 2009



Attack on Cargo Preference Thwarted

In the 11th hour of forming the 2009 supplemental funding legislation, anti food-aid factions were able to slip a provision into the bill that would have removed the Maritime Administration's (MarAd) authority to oversee cargo preference waivers requested by governmental agencies. This specific authority was granted in last year's Department of Defense Authorization, mostly by the efforts of Senator Dan Inouye, in order to monitor and prevent violations.

Spearheaded by the M.E.B.A. legislative staff, the maritime industry was able to get this language removed before the bill progressed. It appears that we are not out of the woods yet, though, as Senator Patrick Leahy has indicated that he plans to introduce similar legislation next session. The M.E.B.A. legislative staff is already in the process of making sure that Sen. Leahy understands the importance of this program and the benefits it provides both domestically and internationally.

TSA Authorization Bill Passes the House

Last week, the House of Representatives approved the Transportation Security Administration authorization bill, legislation that strengthens America's transportation network.

Among various airline provisions, the bill makes necessary changes to the TWIC program. Section 403 of the bill allows for port and maritime personnel, who have applied for a TWIC but have not yet received one, to be escorted onto port facilities by a TWIC holder. The bill also addresses the issue of timing. Once passed, the TSA will be forced to respond to applicants within 30 days after receiving the application and requires a 30 day timeline for the review of appeals and waivers. Further, and especially helpful, the bill allows for the TWIC card to be mailed to mariners and activated at an enrollment center. This should make it so that a second trip is not required which would become particularly burdensome once the enrollment centers are scaled back.

WWII Mariners' Bill Passed in House

The House of Representatives has approved H.R. 23, the “Belated Thank You to the Merchant Mariners of World War II Act of 2009.” The bill would establish a Merchant Mariner Equity Compensation Fund and allow merchant mariners who served between December 7, 1941 and December 31, 1946 to receive monthly payments of \$1,000 out of that fund.

Congressman Bob Filner (D-CA), Chairman of the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs, introduced the bill. He stated, “I have been fighting for more than a decade to provide Merchant Mariners of WWII the thanks they deserve for their forgotten service – not just in words, but in deeds. This Congress is once again on the precipice of correcting a grave injustice heaped upon the gallant men of the Merchant Marine of World War II. These heroes were not granted veteran status until 40 years after the War. We are here today to rectify the improper denial of G.I. Bill benefits and to find a way to compensate them, more than 60 years later, for their heroic deeds.”

A Senate companion bill has once again been introduced by Senator Ben Nelson (D-NE). S. 663 has been referred to the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee. However, Senator Daniel Akaka (D-HI) who chairs the Committee and sets the schedule has not made movement of the bill a priority.