

CONGRESSIONAL MARITIME CAUCUS

It is not an overstatement to say that over the past four years, nearly every maritime program has come under attack. You name it, special interest groups have sought to repeal the program or to underfund it: the Jones Act, PL-480 “Food for Peace” Program, dredging, the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund, the Maritime Security Program, Title XI Shipbuilding Loan Guarantee Program, cargo preference – the list goes on.

Given these tumultuous times, two of the industry’s strongest friends on Capitol Hill (one a Democrat, the other a Republican) announced the formation of the Congressional Maritime Caucus. Both Representatives Michael Grimm (R-NY) and Cedric Richmond (D-LA) spoke at the 2012 MTD Executive Board Meeting. Both are highly appreciated and respected throughout the industry, management and labor alike.

Since its formation in February, the Congressional Maritime Caucus has played a pivotal role in fighting back attacks on the maritime industry. More than anything else, the Caucus has been a moving force in educating members of Congress—many of them who have been on Capitol Hill for only a few years—about maritime’s many contributions.

As Rep. Richmond noted shortly after the formation of the Caucus, “The maritime industry is the unsung hero of our nation’s economy. From Alaska to Puerto Rico, Louisiana to New York, every day this industry facilitates trade and delivers energy resources that support millions of jobs and pays billions in state and federal taxes every year. I also look forward to highlighting the role other industries play in supporting maritime commerce, be it in the fields of law, engineering, shipbuilding or insurance.”

Rep. Grimm added, “The maritime industry is at the heart of New York City’s economic vitality – from our thriving shipping industry to the Staten Island Ferry. As the representative of Staten Island and Brooklyn, I am proud to have the New York Container Terminal in my district that employs hundreds of hard-working men and women. I am honored to co-chair the Congressional Maritime Caucus with Rep. Richmond, and look forward to working with him in support of issues that matter most to our nation’s maritime industry.”

Since its formation, the Caucus has grown to encompass some two dozen House members. Moreover, it has been in contact with pro-maritime senators to coordinate legislative strategies.

In fighting for the rights of maritime workers everywhere and for the important economic and national security interests that the industry generates, Representatives Grimm and Richmond have urged maritime labor to get out the facts about the industry. The MTD, our affiliates and our Port Maritime Councils know the powerful truth behind their challenge. Unless we heed their words, there will be no industry left to defend. And something essential to American defense, the American economy and indeed, the American experience will have died.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Maritime Trades Department, AFL-CIO, its affiliates and its Port Maritime Councils give a strong thank-you to the members of the Congressional Maritime Caucus for understanding the importance of the maritime industry and the federal programs that the industry supports. We pledge to work with the Caucus to fight for the industry's enhancement. Moreover, we will continue our grassroots campaign to get the word out about the important benefits that the US-flag maritime industry generates.