

OPPOSING A PROPOSED U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS SECOND REGISTRY

Since the founding of the United States, the men and women who serve aboard U.S.-flag merchant vessels have a proud history of answering our nation's call. That call may be most evident during times of national defense, but it also includes rushing aid after natural disasters to survivors and families of victims as seen recently when hurricanes and earthquakes rocked Puerto Rico.

America's merchant mariners are the gold standard for the world in terms of safety and training. From iron ore for steel mills along the Great Lakes and food aid to hungry citizens in Africa to material for American armed forces stationed around the world and vital household goods at domestic ports—they deliver.

For generations, foreign interests and their allies have tried to find ways to circumvent the nation's labor and tax laws to take good jobs away from hardworking Americans. The latest effort, announced in February 2021, calls for the creation of a so-called second registry for the U.S. Virgin Islands. As outlined, this initiative would take cargo from U.S.-flag vessels, crewed by American citizens, and place it on vessels that do not use American crews, do not pay American taxes and do not meet American safety and labor standards.

This attempt to create a flag of convenience using the U.S. Virgin Islands is wrong and harmful to America's workers.

The AFL-CIO joins with the Maritime Trades Department, AFL-CIO; the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO; and the Metal Trades Department, AFL-CIO, in calling upon the Biden administration, Congress, the Department of Defense and the Maritime Administration to reject any effort that U.S. Virgin Islands-flag vessels be treated as if they are the same as U.S.-flag, U.S.-crewed vessels for any purpose or for any program. At the same time, we reiterate our commitment to work with the Biden administration and Congress to achieve a more robust, commercially viable U.S.-flag, U.S.-crewed fleet that will continue to protect America's economic, military and homeland security.