

March 30, 2009

The Honorable Bennie Thompson, Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

On behalf of the undersigned American maritime and labor organizations we are writing to ask your help on a matter relating to the implementation of the Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC) program by the United States Transportation Security Administration (TSA). Specifically, the TSA has unilaterally chosen to require all individuals who must obtain a TWIC to appear in person at an enrollment center to actually pick up his or her card. This practice, which is not required by statute, simply ensures that American maritime and other transportation workers will be forced to spend at least a second day away from their jobs sitting and waiting to be handed their TWIC.

It is important to understand that for a significant number of maritime and other transportation workers, whether sailing aboard vessels operating in the foreign trades, along our coasts, or on our inland waterways, or transporting cargo in intrastate and interstate commerce, it is not only time consuming but expensive for them to make a second round trip to the enrollment center. American maritime and transportation workers are a very mobile workforce. The crews working aboard American vessels are frequently far from home and far from the enrollment center where they made their initial application. To force these individuals to return in person to pick-up their card will not only cause them to miss work but will cause vessels to delay their sailing time because they no longer have the requisite number of crewmembers needed to sail the vessel safely and efficiently. For these reasons, maritime and other labor organizations and United States-flag shipping company associations have joined together in urging that the current TSA-imposed practice be ended.

We ask that you and your Committee act to require TSA to establish and implement a process for mailing the TWIC to individuals. We believe the Transportation Worker Identification Credential can be transmitted to individuals via the mail just as other identity documents including passports, social security cards, and merchant mariner documents already are. Doing so will result in a process that will be less burdensome and costly for the American worker and that will eliminate a potential source of disruption in the timely and economical movement of waterborne cargo by United States-flag vessels in our nation's domestic and foreign trades.

We greatly appreciate the strong support you have consistently given to our industry and to America's seafaring and longshore workforces. We again ask for your immediate help to rectify this situation and stand ready to work with you and your staff on this and other proposals relating to the implementation of the TWIC program.

Sincerely,

American Maritime Congress
American Maritime Officers
American Maritime Officers Service
American Waterways Operators
Inlandboatmen's Union of the Pacific
International Brotherhood of Teamsters
International Longshore and Warehouse Union
International Longshoremen's Association
International Organization of Masters, Mates & Pilots
Lake Carriers' Association
Marine Engineers' Beneficial Association
Marine Firemen's Union
Maritime Institute for Research and Industrial Development
Maritime Trades Department, AFL-CIO
Sailors' Union of the Pacific
Seafarers International Union
Transportation Institute
Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO

cc: The Honorable Peter King, Ranking, Committee on Homeland Security
The Honorable Loretta Sanchez, Chairman, Subcommittee on Border, Maritime and
Global Terrorism
The Honorable Mark Souder, Ranking, Subcommittee on Border, Maritime and
Global Terrorism
Members, Committee on Homeland Security