

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 09, 2020

The Honorable Pete Visclosky
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations,
Subcommittee on Defense
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ken Calvert
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations,
Subcommittee on Defense
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Visclosky and Ranking Member Calvert:

As you prepare Fiscal Year 2021 Defense appropriations bill, we write to express our support for \$5 million to support the National Maritime Heritage Grants Program in the Navy's Operation and Maintenance account.

The National Maritime Heritage Act of 1994 established the maritime heritage grants program which provides funding of projects that seek to educate the public about our Nation's rich maritime and naval history. It is funded and administered through a partnership of two federal agencies, United States Maritime Administration (MARAD) and the National Park Service (NPS). The program assists State, local and tribal governments and private nonprofit organizations in preserving cherished historical maritime sites and artifacts with the intention of enhancing public appreciation for America's maritime heritage.

As dictated by statute, 25% of the sales of obsolete vessels from MARAD's National Defense Reserve Fleet must be used to support National Maritime Heritage Grants or for the preservation or presentation of maritime heritage property belonging to MARAD. The formula was most recently updated in the 2017 National Defense Authorization Act to contribute 18.75% to maritime heritage grants. Due to the reliance on the sale of obsolete ships, funding for this program is not guaranteed each year. During FY 17, no vessels were sold and as a result, the last grant cycle was awarded in 2017. Less than \$10 million in grants has been awarded since 1994.

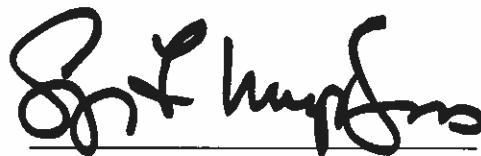
This complicated arrangement has hindered the original intent of the program – to support organizations that educate the public about our Nation's maritime history. A regular appropriation included in the Defense appropriation bill would alleviate some of the cost of maintenance and preservation of these maritime resources. Without reliable sources of funding, non-profit organizations that maintain these historic naval ships, maritime museums, and lighthouses are forced to operate under serious financial constraint.

The maritime heritage community, a group of 1,000 non-profit organizations in over 40 states are committed to increasing public support for America's maritime heritage. We urge you to include \$5 million to support the National Maritime Heritage Grants Program in the Navy's Operation and Maintenance account.

Sincerely,



REP. BRIAN HIGGINS



REP. GREGORY F. MURPHY, M. D.