

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. RES. 463

Condemning the illegal, international use of flag-of-convenience practices.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 3, 2025

Mr. MOYLAN (for himself, Ms. TOKUDA, Mr. CASE, Mr. HUFFMAN, Mr. GARAMENDI, and Mrs. RADEWAGEN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, and in addition to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

RESOLUTION

Condemning the illegal, international use of flag-of-convenience practices.

Whereas many flag-of-convenience ships are not under a binding contractual obligation to serve United States needs in emergencies, and this practice undermines the United States merchant marine fleet for the purposes of United States commerce and military auxiliary in time of war or national emergency;

Whereas many flag-of-convenience ships may not be readily available or compliant during crises, despite being United States-owned, leaving the United States not fully prepared for future threats, and moreover, flag-of-conven-

ience ships may be caught between conflicting national interests, making their reliability in emergencies uncertain;

Whereas flag-of-convenience ships are often used to avoid tariffs, sanctions, and other economic policies, and furthermore, it is unlikely that flag-of-convenience ships will transition back to the United States flag because of a lack of international oversight capacities and criminal opportunity;

Whereas the lack of transparency in the global fishing sector, such as flag of convenience, is a key enabler of illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing;

Whereas the United States Coast Guard has identified illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing as a main contributor to the collapse or decline of fisheries that are critical to the economic growth, food systems, and ecosystems of numerous countries around the world;

Whereas flag-of-convenience practices threaten American maritime-related industries, like supporting illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing, which has cost the global seafood industry approximately \$50,000,000,000 annually;

Whereas the use of flag of convenience by fishing vessels impairs detection capabilities in the fishing sector, impeding efforts to identify, track, and sanction all beneficiaries of the illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing activities;

Whereas flag-of-convenience practices enable crimes such as illicit trafficking, forced labor, and terrorist financing, demonstrating how the lack of international oversight has promoted maritime crime and smuggling;

Whereas a 2002 congressional panel determined that al-Qaida was operating ships under flag-of-convenience practices, exemplifying how lax shipping oversight allows criminals and terrorists to move arms, money, or even weapons of mass destruction;

Whereas the use of flag of convenience reduces employment opportunities for American seafarers by bypassing United States labor standards, and furthermore, ships that operate under United States labor laws may be sold to foreign owners to maintain cost competitiveness through flag-of-convenience practices;

Whereas shipowners use flag of convenience to avoid and undermine existing United States laws, including fair wages, up-to-date onboard safety conditions, adequate food and clean drinking water, and reasonable working hours;

Whereas, according to the International Transport Workers' Federation, workers onboard flag-of-convenience vessels are more likely to experience low wages, poor onboard conditions, insufficient food and clean drinking water, and long periods of work without proper rest;

Whereas nations that offer flag-of-convenience practices may lack the capacity to enforce maritime labor and safety regulations effectively, and additionally, these nations may not have the capabilities to determine if vessels host substandard conditions and a crew that suffers from inadequate working and living conditions;

Whereas some registry nations benefit from international status and fees but may purposefully not ensure compliance with international standards, and some landlocked na-

tions offer open ship registries with minimal oversight for cost saving and criminal usage; and

Whereas the flag-of-convenience practices undermine President Trump’s Restoring America’s Maritime Dominance initiative by attracting United States-built ships to reflag to another nation, and moreover, America’s shipbuilding and ship repair industries are put at a disadvantage because of other nations’ lower ship standards: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

2 (1) recognizes the need for more funding, em-
3 ployment opportunities, and protections for the
4 United States maritime industry;

5 (2) supports initiatives that seek to address
6 critical shortfalls in the United States shipbuilding
7 and ship repair industries while reiterating the need
8 for a capable, reliable United States maritime auxil-
9 iary;

10 (3) reaffirms the congressional support for
11 United States businesses that rely on robust and re-
12 liable maritime shipping, shipbuilding, fishing, and
13 tourism industries;

14 (4) condemns the international use of flag of
15 convenience to avoid tariffs, sanctions, workplace
16 rights, and basic safety standards, as well as sup-
17 porting criminal opportunity, illegal, unreported, and
18 unregulated fishing, and terrorist operations;

1 (5) reiterates the mission of the United States
2 Coast Guard and encourages further international
3 maritime collaborations through vital shiprider
4 agreements;

5 (6) strongly condemns countries that purpose-
6 fully ignore maritime safety standards and mariners'
7 workplace rights;

8 (7) emphasizes the importance of Port State
9 Control Agreement, including the Abuja Memo-
10 randum of Understanding, the Black Sea Memo-
11 randum of Understanding, the Caribbean Memo-
12 randum of Understanding, the Indian Ocean Memo-
13 randum of Understanding, the Mediterranean
14 Memorandum of Understanding, the Paris Memo-
15 randum of Understanding, the Riyadh Memorandum
16 of Understanding, the Tokyo Memorandum of Un-
17 derstanding, and the Viña del Mar Agreement;

18 (8) strongly supports the efforts of the Inter-
19 national Transport Workers' Federation to prevent
20 and mitigate the effects of flag-of-convenience prac-
21 tices; and

22 (9) calls on the United Nations, the Inter-
23 national Maritime Organization, and the Inter-
24 national Labour Organization to condemn flag-of-

- 1 convenience practices globally and assist member na-
- 2 tions in upholding global maritime standards.

