

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

December 3, 2008

The Honorable George W. Bush
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing today to respectfully request that you issue an executive order to extend the exemption of the Delta Queen, an American historic steamboat, from certain vessel laws included in the 1966 *Safety at Sea Act*.

The Delta Queen began her service in 1926, transporting cargo on Northern California waterways. The Delta Queen served in the United States Navy during World War II, patrolling San Francisco Bay, before being purchased in 1946 by a Cincinnati, Ohio company. She was then brought to the Midwest via the Panama Canal, the Mississippi River and the Ohio River. Since then, she has ferried passengers along the Mississippi River and its many tributaries and recreated historic steamboat races at Tall Stacks, a Cincinnati steamboat festival, and the Kentucky Derby Festival. She is the only remaining all-wood paddle-wheeled craft that carries passengers and offers overnight cruises. In 1970, the Delta Queen was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In 1989, the boat was named a National Historic Landmark.

Because of the Delta Queen's wooden superstructure, certain provisions in the 1966 *Safety at Sea Act*, intended to enforce safety regulations for ocean-going vessels carrying overnight passengers on American inland waterways, prevent the Delta Queen from operating. However, since 1966, Congress has passed numerous short-term exemptions for the Delta Queen from vessel laws requiring fire-retardant material to be used in the construction of large ships. On Nov. 1, 2008, the last short-term exemption expired.

Despite operating under a bipartisan exemption for 42 years, critics of the boat have forced it into dry-dock under the guise of being an unacceptable safety risk due to its advanced age and wooden construction. The Delta Queen has a 24-hour watchman and an extensive sprinkler system as part of its overall safety program. The real reason for allowing the exemption to expire is nothing more than partisan politics that should not be allowed to end the Delta Queen's historic and educational river trips.

The Delta Queen is owned by the privately-held Majestic America Line, which utilizes a private workforce rather than union labor. On Oct. 24, 2008, a Pittsburgh Tribune-Review columnist wrote, "Big Labor is that much closer, in a few days, to effectively sinking the Delta Queen. When powerful unions decide to chart a course, their congressional cabin boys usually are ready to sail and, in this case, aim their guns at genuine Americana."

It would be a tragedy to let a labor dispute end the historic Delta Queen's journey. We strongly urge you to issue an executive order exempting the Delta Queen from the 1966 Safety at Sea Act. We thank you for your attention to this request.

Sincerely,



John Boehner (OH-8)
Member of Congress



Steve Chabot (OH-1)
Member of Congress



Jean Schmidt (OH-2)
Member of Congress



Geoff Davis (KY-4)
Member of Congress