

To: Honorable Clyde Hart
Maritime Administrator
U. S. Maritime Administration
c/o Docket Clerk, U.S. DOT Dockets
Room PL-401, Nassif Building
Dept. of Transportation
400 Seventh Street, SW
Washington, DC 20590

Re: Docket No. MARAD-1999-6171
Liquid Natural Gas (LNG) Vessels

I am writing in opposition to the reflagging of the eight LNG vessels referenced above. Allowing reflagging of these LNG tankers is inconsistent with the 1936 Merchant Marine Act and other federal law designed to promote and protect a safe and healthy merchant marine. Perhaps more importantly, I have safety concerns about allowing LNG tankers built with U.S tax dollars to be reflagged and operated by foreign entities. These LNG tankers will almost certainly be plying the waters of Alaska and exporting LNG to foreign countries. What is the point of subsidizing the export of our gas resources in American vessels if we do not continue to operate the vessels our nation built with U.S. crews trained in safe operation of the vessels? Reflagging these vessels raises serious safety and environmental concerns as these vessels will use untested personnel to transport highly dangerous cargo.

With the prospect of additional gas export from Alaska and other parts of the U.S. on the horizon, we need to maintain and increase the number of U.S. flagged LNG vessels. The safety of our sea lanes, protection of our marine resources and the need to balance our nation's unhealthy reliance on foreign maritime commerce argue against reflagging the eight LNG vessels subject of this docket.

Sincerely,

Jerry W. Mahle