

ANNE AND RIK VAN HEMMEN

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November 8, 2024

RE: SL7expo Letter of Support

To whom it may concern,

I am a Naval Architect who came to the United States in 1976. Since completing my engineering education at Virginia Tech in 1982, I have been continuously employed in the US maritime industry. It has provided a solid upper middleclass income for me and my family and financial security into retirement. During this period, job opportunities in the industry have been remarkably stable and today the industry suffers from a serious personnel shortage.

During my career I have been continuously aware that the United States ignores its maritime industry, despite the fact that it continues to be the country's most viable path to the middle class.

The US government does an extremely poor job at promoting this path to the middle class, and this harms underserved communities and areas of the country that do not provide sufficient employment. Since this career path is not dependent on a fixed location, maritime personnel can have families and maintain homes in any part of the country, while their incomes improve their home communities. However, there is no general awareness of this opportunity.

SL7expo is a group of industry professionals that is engaged in the creation of a national maritime education and exposition center to provide national level support in the promotion of commercial maritime and intermodal commerce, career development, and education.

In particular, SL7expo is investigating the preservation of an SL-7 RO/RO container vessel as the centerpiece of a Smithsonian level national maritime educational center.

I strongly support SL7expo's efforts and urge our federal government to provide the support needed to make this effort a reality, and ask the Federal Government to take immediate action in this regard.

With a commitment by the Federal Government to provide the financial foundation, I also pledge my in-kind and financial support in this cooperative effort to strengthen the country and the maritime industry.

Very truly yours,



Rik van Hemmen, P.E.