November 16, 2026

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Secretary, U.S. Department of State
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable Brooke L. Rollins
Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, DC 20250

The Honorable Doug Burgum
Chair, National Energy Dominance Council
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Kevin A. Hassett
Director, National Economic Council
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Chris Wright
Secretary, U.S. Department of Energy
Washington, DC 20585

Admiral Kevin E. Lunday
Commandant
U.S. Coast Guard
2703 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20593

Dear Secretaries Rubio, Burgum, Wright, and Rollins, Director Hassett, and Admiral Lunday;

On behalf of corn growers and ethanol producers across the country, we urge the Administration to make maritime fuel a priority market for American corn ethanol. Global shipping is choosing the fuels it will burn for the next generation, and U.S. corn ethanol is ready to compete for that business. Ensuring this opportunity would give corn growers a major new source of demand at a time when they need it most.

Corn growers are facing a fourth consecutive year of net income losses, and the outlook beyond 2026 is no better without new, lasting sources of demand. In the presence of outdated regulatory barriers and market access restrictions, traditional markets alone cannot absorb all that American farmers are able to grow. Maritime fuel is one of the largest new markets on the horizon. This is not a distant opportunity. NCGA estimates that alcohol-capable ships already operating today could use nearly 2 billion gallons of ethanol annually, equivalent to roughly 680 million bushels of corn[1]. Ships already on order could expand that opportunity to 7.7 billion gallons (approximately 2.7 billion bushels), with further growth potential as the fleet expands in the future.[2]

The impacts of that new demand would be felt first in rural America. Ethanol is made in farming communities across the country, where facilities buy grain from local growers, strengthen local corn prices, employ skilled workers, and anchor the tax base of small towns. Demand from shipping could put idle U.S. ethanol capacity to work without building new plants, and every gallon also yields distillers grains, a high-protein feed for American livestock. The value of this market would flow directly into farm income, local businesses, and the main streets of rural communities.

U.S. ethanol is ready to serve this market today. More than 100 ships already in operation were built with the capability to run on methanol; they can also run on ethanol with little to no modification, and every major marine engine manufacturer has now tested it. Leading global shipping lines have begun running vessels on ethanol, and in September a deep-sea vessel took the first ship-to-ship

[1] NCGA, "U.S. Corn Ethanol is Ready for Maritime Fuel", 2026
[2] NCGA, "U.S. Corn Ethanol is Ready for Maritime Fuel", 2026

bunkering of 100% U.S. corn ethanol at a U.S. port[3]. Hundreds more alcohol-capable ships are on order, and American ethanol is abundant, affordable, and produced at scale.

Every gallon of U.S. ethanol burned at sea is an American-grown, American-made fuel competing in a global market. Fueling ships with American ethanol at American ports would strengthen U.S. ports and supply chains and exporting it would put more American energy into world markets.

Whether this market opens to American farmers will largely depend on international rules now being negotiated at the International Maritime Organization (IMO). A practical alternative to the proposed Net-Zero Framework offers U.S. biofuels an opportunity to gain a seat at the table. Under any approach, however, the IMO will still decide how each fuel's carbon emissions are scored, and U.S. corn ethanol does not yet have a recognized value. Additionally, some proposals on sustainability criteria could restrict U.S. corn ethanol's use while simultaneously promoting Brazilian ethanol use. The Administration has already taken important steps to secure fair treatment for corn ethanol – including submission of proposed carbon emission default values to the IMO, and we urge you to see that work through at the IMO meetings this November and December and beyond.

Specifically, we ask that the Administration make fair treatment of U.S. corn ethanol a top U.S. objective at the IMO, including a carbon score that recognizes the conservation practices American farmers are already adopting. Any alternative to the Net-Zero Framework should credit biofuels that cut emissions today and should not exclude U.S. agricultural feedstocks. We also ask that the U.S. delegation continue to utilize the expertise of USDA at IMO, and that the Administration support the port infrastructure needed to fuel ships with American ethanol.

Corn growers have answered every call to produce more for this country. Maritime fuel offers a chance to turn that productivity into lasting demand, stronger farm incomes, and more vibrant rural communities. We would welcome the opportunity to meet with your offices before the IMO's November and December meetings, and we stand ready to support the Administration with data and technical expertise.

Thank you.

Signed,

National Corn Growers Association
Growth Energy
Renewable Fuels Association

Alabama Soybean & Corn Association
Georgia Corn Growers Association
Iowa Corn Growers Association
Illinois Corn Growers Association
Indiana Corn Growers Association
Kansas Corn Growers Association
Kentucky Corn Growers Association
Michigan Corn Growers Association
Minnesota Corn Growers Association
Missouri Corn Growers Association
North Carolina Corn Growers Association

North Dakota Corn Growers Association
Nebraska Corn Growers Association
Ohio Corn & Wheat Growers Association
Pennsylvania Corn Growers Association
South Carolina Corn and Soybean Association
South Dakota Corn Growers Association
Tennessee Corn Growers Association
Texas Corn Producers Association
Virginia Grain Producers Association
Wisconsin Corn Growers Association