



THE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20590

June 20, 2013

Dear Class of 2013 Graduates,

Congratulations on a job well done! You've accomplished so much in your time at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, and I'd like to reiterate how proud I am of your character, integrity, and leadership.

As I said at your commencement ceremony, I feel a special connection to your class because you and I both came to Kings Point for the first time in 2009. Over the last 4 years, it's clear that we've come a long way together.

From Delano Hall to Mallory Pier, we are rebuilding and repairing the Academy's facilities. We have secured a new training vessel with modern technology. And in just one year, Admiral Helis has made many other improvements, which you saw firsthand during your time at Kings Point. He has upgraded security on campus, enhanced diversity, instituted sound management practices, and strengthened accountability across the institution. He also is implementing a strategic plan that puts the Academy on a path to long-term success. Thanks to his strong leadership, the Academy is better positioned to train the next generation of maritime leaders.

On that note, I'd like to express my disappointment over the planes that interrupted your commencement ceremony. Monday was your day, and should have been about your accomplishments, your success, and your leadership—period.

As graduates, all of you will play an enormous role in supporting our Nation's economy and national security on the waterways and open seas. In these efforts, you will always have the support of President Obama and the U.S. Department of Transportation. But we can't do this alone. As alumni, you can work with us to ensure that the Academy continues to be a model institution that educates midshipmen who are leaders of character and integrity well into the future.

Your commencement was the culmination of your hard work. President Obama and I are both very proud of you for becoming the leaders you are today. And we can't wait to see what you accomplish in your long and fulfilling careers. Good luck and Godspeed.

Sincerely yours,

Ray LaHood

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, likely belonging to Ray LaHood, is written over the typed name and extends across the bottom of the page.