

Senator's Bill would Surrender U.S. Jobs to Foreign Shipping Interests



Sen. Mike Lee, a Republican from land-locked Utah has put forth a bill to repeal the cabotage provisions of the Merchant Marine Act of 1920, better known as the Jones Act. His bill, S. 694, would surrender U.S. mariner jobs to foreign counterparts and wave the white flag on the U.S. Merchant Marine. The “Open America’s Waters Act of 2019,” takes up the mantle for recently deceased Sen. John McCain who introduced virtually identical bills in 2010 and 2017.

Pointing to estimates by the Cato Institute, Sen. Lee noted that, “Restricting trade between U.S. ports is a huge loss for American consumers and producers. It is long past time to repeal the Jones Act entirely so that Alaskans, Hawaiians, and Puerto Ricans aren’t forced to pay higher prices for imported goods—and so they rapidly receive the help they need in the wake of natural disasters.” The bill has been referred to the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

The bill parrots poorly thought-out criticisms leveled by misinformed Jones Act opponents and would obviously sacrifice a wealth of good American jobs. It would also represent a capitulation of our national security to foreign interests.



American Maritime Partnership President Matt Woodruff, said "...this legislation would do harm to the U.S. by outsourcing hundreds of thousands of American jobs, opening our coastal borders and undermining American national and homeland security. U.S. military and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officials have consistently made clear the importance of the Jones Act to the safeguarding of our nation."

Along with the blight on our U.S. flag fleet and American mariners stemming from a repeal, the negative implications on the nation's security would be inestimable. The U.S. Coast Guard and Customs are already

overburdened with current enforcement requirements. A repeal would open the floodgates for foreign vessels and mariners on our coastlines and inner waterways necessitating a nightmare array of concerns that those agencies aren't equipped to contain.

Maritime Administrator Rear Admiral Mark Buzby consistently points out the need for the Jones Act. He noted, "Take away the Jones Act, you have taken away the majority of jobs for our U.S. mariners in peacetime, that we need in wartime. Getting rid of the Jones Act does not think through all of the ramifications it has on our war fighting ability..." At a March Congressional hearing, Rear Admiral Buzby stated, "without question, the Jones Act is absolutely foundational to our nation's ability to maintain a Merchant Marine in peacetime that will be there to serve this nation in time of crisis."

The M.E.B.A. legislative department, in alliance with maritime industry proponents, remain vigilant against attacks on U.S.-flag interests and will continue to fight against such incursions. M.E.B.A. members, retirees and applicants can help assist our battle to preserve U.S.-flag mariner jobs by supporting the M.E.B.A. Political Action Fund. Visit your local Union hall or use the M.E.B.A. website to make a contribution!

