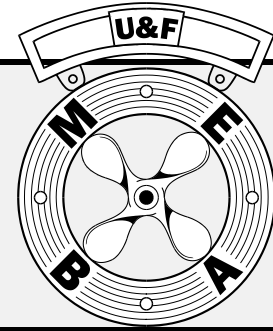


LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

OCTOBER 2017



The whirlwind of misinformed Jones Act reporting has largely subsided following news of Puerto Rico's plight in the wake of Hurricane Maria. Poor or biased reporting misled many into believing that the Jones Act was preventing millions of hard-hit Puerto Ricans from receiving needed relief supplies. As a result, a ten-day Jones Act waiver was granted on Thursday.

In actuality, there has been no lack of U.S.-flag vessels delivering supplies including food and water, equipment to restore the power grid, building materials as well as FEMA and Red Cross relief cargoes. Many foreign-flag vessels from overseas ports are also on the scene in Puerto Rico.

However there have been difficulties in distributing the received aid throughout the country because of inaccessibility and ruined or inadequate infrastructure. Rep. John Garamendi (D-CA), pointed out that "the problem is not that the containers [with relief supplies] are not arriving in Puerto Rico, it's that they're not getting off the dock." Over 10,000 containers have been stacked up at the port in San Juan for days with no immediate answers for their dispersal throughout the country to needed recipients.

But several high-profile talk shows and newspapers, fueled by foreign shipping interests, forwarded the fiction that the Jones Act was hampering relief efforts. Many Americans, having heard about the Jones Act for the first time, now believe the Act has exacerbated relief efforts while ballooning consumer goods for the average Puerto Rican.

Though in many cases, the facts finally wound their way to the front, assisted by U.S. shipping advocates, many Jones Act opponents and neophytes will likely cling to their erroneous and misunderstood opinions. That creates another hurdle for our industry and our mission to keep U.S.-flag shipping strong with an adequate pool of mariners to support this country in times of peace and war.

Perennial Jones Act opponent Sen. John McCain (R-AZ) used this opportunity to introduce new legislation to permanently repeal the Jones Act for Puerto Rico. Rep. Nydia Velázquez (D-N.Y.) has introduced a bill that expands the scope of granting waivers to include humanitarian disasters. M.E.B.A.'s legislative team and the industry are working to make sure lawmakers are informed about the importance of the Jones Act and the Union encourages all members, applicants and retirees to do their part. Several useful statements have been posted on the M.E.B.A. homepage (www.mebaunion.org) that will assist you when writing to your Congressional representation or responding to some no-nothing who spouts off misleading anti-Jones Act nonsense.

You can also visit <https://tinyurl.com/y9e6k56j> to sign on to a ready-made letter in support of the Jones Act. The Navy League site will allow you to click a few buttons that will send your letter to your entire delegation in a matter of seconds.