

MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)



“On Watch in Peace and War since 1875”
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AFL-CIO, OTHERS AIR CONCERNS OVER JONES ACT WAIVER

More voices have emerged expressing alarm over the Trump administration’s sweeping 60-day issuance of a Jones Act waiver that permits foreign-flagged ships to move oil, liquefied natural gas, fertilizer, coal, and other key commodities between U.S. ports. The waiver was issued under the guise that it would save Americans money at the gas pump although a recent Navigistics Consulting study concluded that any potential savings from such a waiver would be “well less than a penny per gallon.”

The waiver was issued “in the interest of national defense to address an immediate adverse effect on military operations,” yet a closer look reveals that it will allow foreign entities to carry over 650 categories of products between U.S. ports. Requirements that were instituted in 2021 will allow some transparency into foreign-flag use of this waiver. Under 46 U.S.C. § 501(c), vessel owners or operators are required to file a report with the Maritime Administrator within 10 days of completing a voyage conducted under a Jones Act waiver, and the U.S. Maritime Administration must post that report online within 48 hours of receiving it.

The American Maritime Partnership (AMP) referenced the reporting mechanism as they issued a statement this week concerning the waiver. AMP is a broad-based coalition representing U.S.-flag vessel operators and allied interests which include M.E.B.A. and the American Maritime Congress.

They noted, “We are deeply concerned about this 60-day, broad waiver being abused and unnecessarily displacing American workers and American companies. The law sets a high bar: this waiver exists solely to address an immediate threat to military operations, not to displace American workers or reward foreign operators. Every vessel movement under this waiver must be publicly disclosed and justified according to federal law. We will be watching closely — and so will the American public. We also reiterate that this waiver will not reduce gas prices. The maximum potential impact of domestic shipping on the cost of gasoline nationwide is less than one penny per gallon.”

The AFL-CIO also issued concerns that the pro-American law is being excepted to benefit overseas shipping interests. The Federation stated, “As American maritime workers risk their lives in the Middle East and around the world, it is deeply concerning that the Trump administration would open U.S. waterways to nonunion foreign competitors. This unnecessary and ineffective waiver is a giveaway to foreign shipping interests, dressed up as relief for America’s families at the pump.

60 MINUTES SEGMENT ON SHIPBUILDING; MORE WAIVER CRITICISM

Shipbuilding was spotlighted this last weekend on CBS' *60 Minutes* show on Sunday which aired a segment examining the widening gap between American shipyards and their global competitors.

While U.S. yards often deliver just one or two vessels per year, leading yards in South Korea and China are producing ships at a far greater rate, with shorter build times and significantly lower costs. A central focus of the segment was Hanwha Group's recent entry into the U.S. market through its acquisition of Philly Shipyard. The company has laid out ambitious plans to invest billions to expand capacity, modernize production, and transfer advanced shipbuilding techniques from South Korea.

The program also featured commentary from the CATO Group's Colin Grabow who continued his verbal barrage against the Jones Act. He argued that the law distorts the domestic shipping market and undermines the very shipbuilding capacity it is intended to protect. You can see the 13-minute *60 Minutes* segment [here](#).

Politico's online newsletter covering Capitol Hill politics reported on CATO's moment in the sun and opposition to the Jones Act. To their credit, *Politico* interviewed a pro-U.S.-flag shipping enthusiast who pointed out that the Jones Act, among other things, helps sustain well-paid maritime jobs, adheres to higher safety standards and maintains a stable pool of qualified U.S. officers and crew.

Talking to *Politico*, M.E.B.A. Secretary-Treasurer Roland Rexha addressed the scourge of flag of convenience operators happy to displace American jobs. He noted that the Jones Act helps limit the ability of poorly regulated and exploitative shipping companies to operate in American waters. "It's modern-day slave labor," he said, "you just can't compete against that." "Do you want someone who may not get paid, not get fed; they're destroying safety standards globally."

The waiver prompted other news outlets to reach out for comment on what is an unfamiliar topic to most Americans. The *Dallas Express* asked M.E.B.A.'s Gulf Coast Vice President Adam Smith about the early impacts of the waiver as well as the risks of issuing such a gift to foreign shipping interests.

V.P. Smith told the news outlet that, "Since the recent announcement, we are already seeing reports indicating that traders are quickly chartering foreign-flagged tankers in the spot market, taking advantage of arbitrage opportunities created by the waiver. This will create uncertainty in scheduling, employment, and long-term investment decisions tied to U.S.-flag operations, while benefiting foreign vessel operators seeking to exploit the market for short-term profit at the expense of American workers. Additionally, the overly broad waiver will undermine the stability of the U.S.-flag tanker market, specifically domestic tanker rates, which are often steady under long-term charters due to the Jones Act. In fact, you can already see in the recent case study that the foreign rates currently being charged far exceed what was offered by domestic transport prior to the waiver being issued."

He warned about the danger of setting a precedent excepting the Ship America law. "If Jones Act waivers become normalized," he said, "the greatest risk is the damaging signal they send to the U.S. maritime industry. Even if the immediate impact is limited, the message is clear: why invest in U.S.-flag vessels, shipyard capacity, or workforce development if the government can waive the requirement to use American ships whenever market pressures arise?" Continuing, he noted "To rebuild the U.S. Merchant Marine, we cannot keep pulling the floor out from under the industry we

want to grow, as such waivers clearly contradict recent commitments made under the Administration’s recently unveiled Maritime Action Plan (MAP) and Executive Order to Restore American Maritime Dominance.”

ALTERNATE LOCATION TRAINING PROCEDURES

Information regarding training at alternate locations is available on the Calhoon M.E.B.A. Engineering School’s website including the form you need to fill out. You can follow this link to go there directly. To note:

- All Members wishing to attend training at an alternate location MUST get approval by the CMES Director PRIOR to attending the training.
- Send the completed Request for Alternate Location Training form, along with a copy of your current dues receipt and latest discharge, to the school by email, mail or fax. Again the EMAIL TO SEND APPLICATIONS: altloc@mebaschool.org The School will notify you regarding the approval or disapproval of your application.
- Evidence of successful completion of the desired class (a copy of the Certificate of Completion and a copy of the tuition receipt) must be submitted to CMES within 6 months of the completion of the course.
- Approved course topics and maximum reimbursement rates can be found on CMES website at <https://www.mebaschool.org/admissions/meba-students-admissions-procedures/alternate-location-training-information> **NOTE: TRAVEL IS NOT REIMBURSED FOR THIS TRAINING**

M.E.B.A. SECRETARY-TREASURER ON MARITIME PODCAST

M.E.B.A. Secretary-Treasurer Roland Rexha discussed the M.E.B.A. and his journey into the industry during a recent Offshore Marine Service Association (OMSA) podcast of “Maritime in America.” Rex shared a personal and professional journey shaped by immigrant roots, public service, and decades in the U.S. maritime industry. He emphasized that one of the industry’s biggest challenges is awareness — many people simply don’t know maritime careers exist. He highlighted the industry as a powerful pathway to upward mobility, offering opportunities to move from poverty into the middle class and beyond. He also underscored the importance of unions like M.E.B.A., which not only advocate for safety and fair labor standards but also provide significant benefits, including a rare 20-year pension.

Rex also emphasized unity and action, arguing that labor, companies, and policymakers must work together to grow the U.S. maritime industry and push Congress to actively support it. He highlighted maritime jobs as “purple-collar”- offering blue-collar work with high wages and real opportunities to build generational wealth. He also stressed that the U.S. maritime industry should compete on quality, safety, and high standards rather than lowering itself to match foreign competitors, framing American mariners as a “white-glove” workforce essential to both economic strength and national security. He called for rebuilding the domestic maritime base, especially shipbuilding and cargo capacity, through practical solutions, industry collaboration, and investment, rather than relying on outdated approaches or excessive subsidies.

You can check out the podcast [here](#).

BATH IRON WORKS UNION IS ON STRIKE

About 600 Bath Marine Draftsmen's Association (UAW Local 3999) workers are on strike after the BMDA membership rejected the latest General Dynamics-Bath Iron Works' "best and final offer." The union said the offer didn't sufficiently address real member priorities — including wages that are lower than the national average, affordable insurance, and retirement income security.

"General Dynamics continues to make record profits off our labor and gives away billions every year through stock buybacks and dividends while many of our members live paycheck to paycheck," said Trent Vellella, President of BMDA. "With this Company proposal, General Dynamics is continuing to show that corporate earnings per share are more important than our members' earning per pay period."

PORT OF VIRGINIA IS NOW DEEPEST EAST COAST PORT

Construction of the 55-foot deep shipping channel and harbor, a key project in The Port of Virginia's \$1.4 billion Gateway Investment Program, is complete making Virginia home to the deepest port on the U.S. East Coast.

The channel dredging was completed Feb. 28, and the post-dredge survey to confirm the channel's depth and width, along with additional maintenance work, is underway. Once the expanded and deepened channel has been mapped and its depths verified, the maritime charts will be updated to reflect the increased capacity. All work is scheduled for completion in late spring. The dredging project also included widening areas of the channel, which allows for two-way traffic of ultra-large container vessels (ULCVs); the widening project was completed in February 2024.

TROLL HEADING UP METAL TRADES

Dale Troll has been appointed President of the Metal Trades Department, AFL-CIO, by the Executive Council, succeeding outgoing President Edward Jones. President Troll began his career as an apprentice with United Association (UA) Local 486 in Baltimore, where he developed the skills and work ethic that have guided his career in the labor movement. Troll spent more than a decade working for some of the region's largest HVAC contractors as a journeyman technician. He later joined the Mid-Atlantic Pipe Trades Association staff, serving as an organizer and legislative liaison where he advocated for workers' rights, strengthened union membership, and advanced pro-worker policies.

For the past eight years, he has served as the East Coast General Representative for the Metal Trades Department, working closely with affiliated unions and Metal Trades Councils to strengthen collective bargaining, support organizing efforts, and promote solidarity across the labor movement.

MARITIME PILOTS AIR CONCERNS OF FUNDING LAPSE IMPACT ON COAST GUARD CREDENTIALING

The American Pilots' Association (APA), the national trade association of professional maritime pilots, expressed their concerns that the ongoing Department of Homeland Security (DHS) funding lapse is negatively impacting the ability of the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) to carry out critical navigation safety and mariner credentialing services.

"APA and our member pilot associations value the important navigation safety and credentialing services the USCG provides." said APA President Captain Jorge Viso. "This shutdown impacts these services and unnecessarily puts navigation safety and the maritime supply chain at risk."

This shutdown began on February 14, following the failure to pass DHS funding legislation. Although the shutdown is over immigration enforcement policy, it also impacts the USCG and its ability to provide vital safety services, including fully staffed Vessel Traffic Service Centers (VTSC), robust upkeep of critical aids to navigation (ATON), and the issuance/renewal of Merchant Mariner Credentials (MMC). The Coast Guard's VTSCs enhance maritime safety and environmental protection and help prevent marine accidents by providing navigation assistance, traffic advisories, and weather updates to vessels transiting busy ports. VTSCs also play a key role in ensuring compliance with waterway security procedures.

“This shutdown has not only forced over 40,000 USCG personnel to work without pay, but it has also needlessly put America’s waterways and maritime supply chain at heightened risk,” APA Executive Director-General Counsel, Clay Diamond said. “We respectfully urge both political parties and all branches of government to resolve this deadlock or find a solution to fund the USCG while immigration policy disputes are resolved. Our ports and waterways and the safe and environmentally safe movement of the maritime cargo upon which our Nation relies are too important to allow this shutdown to drag on.”

NEXT MONTHLY MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS *(All times are local)*

Monday, April 6 – **Closed. Jesse Calhoun Day (Observed)**

Tuesday, April 7 – **Boston@1200; CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230; Seattle (Fife)@1300.**

Wednesday, April 8 – **Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315; Online HQ “Town Hall” Meeting@1300 (No Voting) – Register by emailing mebahq@mebaunion.org**

Thursday, April 9 – **L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300.**

Friday, April 10 – **Honolulu@1100**

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***M.E.B.A. does not tolerate assault, or harassment of any kind.
If you see something, say something – The M.E.B.A. Emergency Hotline
can be reached at 1-888-519-0018.***

The M.E.B.A. is the nation's oldest maritime labor union, established in 1875. M.E.B.A.'s expertise and demonstrated track record of readiness, safety, and loyalty in answering America's call to action in times of both peace and war is unrivaled in the world. M.E.B.A. HQ – Phone: (202) 638-5355; mebahq@mebaunion.org. Website: www.mebaunion.org For publication and related inquiries (and to send photos & hot news tips) contact Marco Cannistraro, M.E.B.A. Special Projects & Communications – marco@mebaunion.org Visit us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter and check us out on Instagram. The Calhoun M.E.B.A. Engineering School can be contacted at (410) 822-9600 or www.mebaschool.org. M.E.B.A. Plans is at (410) 547-9111 or www.mebaplans.org