



# LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

## JANUARY 2021

### President Signs Omnibus Spending & COVID-19 Economic Relief Package

After several months of bipartisan negotiations, Congress passed and President Trump signed into law a \$900 billion COVID-relief package combined with a \$1.4 trillion government spending bill that gives critical pandemic aid to Americans while maintaining ongoing federal agency operations through September 2021. For the maritime industry, the spending package includes \$314 million for the Maritime Security Program ensuring the continuous operations of the 60 enrolled vessels. In addition, the COVID-19 relief partition contains an additional \$45 billion in economic relief for the transportation industry, \$16 billion of which will be directed for public transportation to ensure that transit and ferry operators can respond to COVID-19. Specifically, these funds will be made available for operating expenses to maintain service, lost revenue, and furloughs caused by reduced service.

### Congress Overturns Presidential Veto on Annual Defense Bill, Several Maritime Provisions Enacted

On December 23<sup>rd</sup>, President Trump vetoed the annual defense bill commonly referred to as the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2021, due to its lack of inclusion to repeal a law that shields internet companies from being liable for what is posted on their websites. In response, the House of Representatives overwhelmingly voted to overturn the President's veto (requires two-thirds vote majority) by a 322 to 87 vote, while the Senate voted to do the same 81 to 13.

The \$740 billion defense bill includes numerous maritime provisions long sought for by the M.E.B.A. that will contribute to the future growth of the industry while meeting our growing national defense needs. These provisions

---

include increased authorized funding for the Maritime Security Program to allow vessel operators to respond to the pandemic (these funds must be appropriated by a separate act of Congress), establishment of a 10-vessel Tanker Security Fleet, a non-partisan audit of federal agencies in compliance or non-compliance with cargo preference laws, restrictions on the Jones Act waiver process to avoid exploitation by foreign-flag vessels, and establishment of a maritime emergency relief authority so that the Maritime Administration may provide financial assistance to support the Maritime Transportation System in the event of a national emergency or disaster, including the COVID-19 pandemic.

---