
LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

NOVEMBER 2021



Congress Enacts Long-Awaited Bipartisan Infrastructure Legislation

On Nov 5, the House passed the passed the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, a \$1.2 trillion infrastructure package that reauthorizes existing transportation programs and provides new spending for roads, bridges, electric vehicles, broadband, and water & port infrastructure. The legislation is considered one of the largest investments in transportation infrastructure in American history and includes nearly \$550 billion in new investments toward a number of domestic maritime industry priorities. Specifically, billions of dollars will be invested in port and ferry services supported by the M.E.B.A., including:

- **\$1 billion** for ferry service in rural areas including the Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS)
- **\$337 million** for the construction of Ferry Boats and Terminal Facilities Program under the Federal Transit Administration
- **\$250 million** for the establishment of a Department of Transportation pilot program to provide grants for the purchase of electric or low-emission ferries
- **\$2.25 billion** for the Maritime Administration's Port Infrastructure Development Program, among other critical investments.

The bipartisan legislation was approved by the Senate last August by a 69-30 vote where it was stalled in the House following months long negotiations as Congressional Democrats grappled with how to move forward on an anticipated multi-trillion dollar social spending package vote later this year. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act is headed to President Biden's desk where he is expected to sign it into law immediately as part of the Administration's campaign promise to create jobs and grow the economy through infrastructure spending.

Congressional Leaders Call for Pause of 'Sea Year' Pending USMMA Changes

On October 29, House and Senate leaders penned a letter to Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg calling for a pause of the Sea Year program until the end of the term, in light of recent allegations that a female Kings Point cadet was sexually assaulted in 2019. The letter penned by Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA), Representatives Peter DeFazio (D-OR), Adam Smith (D-WA), Jackie Speier (D-CA), Joe Courtney (D-CT) and Salud Carbajal (D-CA) urged the DOT to "develop a public written action plan that includes detailed steps that will be taken to ensure the safety of cadets at sea" prior to resuming the program, while also calling for leadership at the Academy. The M.E.B.A. has been actively working with Congress and the Administration and leaders to address sexual assault and harassment in the maritime industry. On Nov. 5, President Adam Vokac and Executive Vice President Claudia Cimini spoke at a roundtable discussion hosted by MarAd outlining actionable steps being taken by the M.E.B.A. while also reaffirming the Union's commitment toward ensuring safety in the workplace.
