

April 2, 2020

Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Trump:

We recently learned that you will be meeting tomorrow with certain chief executive officers from the oil and gas industry and that some of those officials may ask you to waive the Jones Act. We write to strongly oppose any Jones Act waiver.

The American domestic maritime industry produces 650,000 jobs nationwide that have been designated by the Department of Homeland Security as part of the essential critical infrastructure workforce. Americans have radically cut back on driving and flying, reducing demand for petroleum products, which reduces the need to ship petroleum products in our domestic markets. As a result, there is a more-than-ample supply of U.S. vessel capacity available to transport oil within the United States. A Jones Act waiver in these circumstances – replacing American mariners and American ships with foreign mariners and foreign ships in our home waters – is unnecessary and contrary to our collective need to come together as a nation to fight this virus.

Waiving the Jones Act means outsourcing American maritime jobs to foreign shipping companies that do not pay U.S. taxes. Many of the foreign vessels would have been made in China and are operated with foreign crews who do not pay U.S. taxes and cannot be counted on to go into harm's way for America's interests. Those foreign ships would displace modern American vessels made in Pennsylvania, Mississippi, Wisconsin, California, Florida and elsewhere in America. They would send American mariners home at a time when they most need the work. Those Americans are working across the country today, at the risk of their own health, to carry out, as you have said, their "special responsibility" to maintain their normal work schedules. A waiver would allow foreign vessels and foreign crews to enter purely domestic commerce, a bad idea in any circumstance but certainly more so during the current COVID-19 crisis.

Should these officials nevertheless ask for a Jones Act waiver, we urge you to decline their request.

Sincerely,

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