



April 23, 2026

The Honorable Mike Johnson  
 Speaker of the House  
 H-232 Capitol Building  
 Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Thune  
 Senate Majority Leader  
 511 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
 Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries  
 House Minority Leader  
 2267 Rayburn House Office Building  
 Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
 Senate Minority Leader  
 322 Hart Senate Office Building  
 Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressional Leaders:

The undersigned organizations, representing thousands of businesses and millions of workers across America’s diverse supply chains for energy, agriculture, and food, support President Trump's 60-day partial waiver of the Jones Act.<sup>1</sup> We commend the Administration for taking this necessary step to ease supply chain constraints resulting from the conflict in the Middle East and related disruptions that have meaningful impacts on U.S. consumers. With just weeks remaining before the waiver expires, we write to urge Congress to ensure the relief provided by this waiver is not only preserved but made permanent through meaningful reform.

We write, however, to highlight that the very need for this emergency waiver is an indictment of the underlying law. For too long, Jones Act reform has been treated as a “third rail” issue in Washington. We believe that posture is no longer tenable. A statute that must be suspended every time the nation faces economic stress is a statute in need of permanent reform and modernization. This is not an isolated event: the federal government has been compelled to waive the Jones Act in response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita (2005), the Libyan crisis (2011), Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria (2017), the Colonial Pipeline cyberattack (2021), Hurricane Fiona (2022), and most recent conflict in the Middle East.<sup>2</sup> The cycle of waive-and-forget must end. We urge Congress to confront this issue directly and begin the serious work of reforming this antiquated law.

The entire domestic waterborne supply chain currently depends on a fleet of just 93 Jones Act-eligible vessels, and of the nearly 7,500 oil tankers operating worldwide, only 54 qualify to carry petroleum between American ports.<sup>3</sup> Among dry bulk vessels suited for transporting fertilizer, *not even one qualifies*. Peer-reviewed research has found that Jones Act shipping costs

approximately three times more than equivalent foreign-flag service, and that removing the law's restrictions on petroleum alone would increase Gulf Coast-to-East Coast fuel shipments by 47 percent.<sup>4</sup>

Our nation is also an outlier among its peers. While more than 100 countries maintain some form of cabotage law, the U.S. is virtually alone in requiring that vessels be domestically built. Neither China, nor Canada, Japan, South Korea, nor the nations of the European Union impose a domestic-build mandate.<sup>5</sup> The result: just two percent of U.S. domestic freight moves by water, compared with 40 percent in the European Union and 15 percent in Australia.<sup>6</sup>

Supply chain analysts have cautioned that current supply chain disruptions will not be fully resolved when this waiver expires on May 17, even if the conflict in the Middle East were to fully resolve by then. Vessel repositioning, chartering cycles, and inventory drawdowns operate on timelines that extend well beyond 60 days. Our members deliver heating oil and propane to homes, diesel to farms and truck fleets, gasoline to motorists, fertilizer to fields, and food to American families. They understand that temporary relief afforded by the current waiver does not address a structural problem, and we urge Congress to acknowledge the same.

The law has also failed on its own terms. It was designed to sustain American shipbuilding, yet the United States now accounts for just 0.04 percent of global commercial shipbuilding output. China builds roughly 1,000 cargo ships per year, while the United States builds approximately three.<sup>7</sup> The Jones Act fleet has more than halved since 1980. Given the state of the American maritime industry and the considerable time it would take to remedy its deficiencies, we cannot afford to continue deferring action.

We urge Congress to:

1. Conduct hearings examining the supply chain, consumer, energy reliability, and national security implications of the Jones Act, drawing on the extensive body of independent economic research now available;
2. Consider measures to reform and modernize the Jones Act's vessel eligibility requirements, particularly the domestic-build mandate that has constrained fleet capacity and driven construction costs to multiples of the international norm;
3. Explore permanent exemptions and/or streamlined waiver procedures for critical commodities, including energy products and agricultural inputs; and
4. Evaluate the Open America's Waters Act (H.R. 3940 / S. 2043) and related reform proposals on their merits.

The President's emergency waiver confirms what our members have long known: this law, as written, is not working for the American economy. It is time to put this issue front and center and take an earnest approach to reform. We stand ready to work with Congress on a bipartisan basis to modernize the Jones Act and build a maritime policy that strengthens America's supply chains.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Respectfully,

Agricultural Retailers Association  
American Farm Bureau Federation  
AmericanHort  
Energy Marketers of America  
National Association of Shell Marketers  
National Cattlemen's Beef Association  
National Energy & Fuels Institute  
National Propane Gas Association  
National Restaurant Association  
National Retail Federation  
North American Renderers Association  
The Fertilizer Institute  
USA Pulses  
USA Pulses Trade Association

cc: Members, Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation  
Members, House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure  
White House Domestic Policy Council

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<sup>1</sup> Merchant Marine Act of 1920 (Jones Act), Pub. L. No. 66-261, § 27, 41 Stat. 988, codified as amended at 46 U.S.C. § 55102.

<sup>2</sup>National Taxpayers Union Foundation, documented Jones Act waivers 2005–2026.

<sup>3</sup>U.S. Maritime Administration (MARAD), U.S. Flag Fleet Report, December 2025.

<sup>4</sup>Ryan Kellogg & Terry Sweeney, "Impacts of the Jones Act on U.S. Petroleum Markets," National Bureau of Economic Research, Working Paper No. 31938, December 2023.

<sup>5</sup>OECD Services Trade Restrictiveness Index; International Transport Workers' Federation, Cabotage Laws of the World, 2025 edition. While approximately 105 countries maintain some form of cabotage restriction, the United States is virtually alone in requiring domestic construction of eligible vessels.

<sup>6</sup>European Commission, Eurostat, modal split of freight transport; Australian Bureau of Infrastructure and Transport Research Economics.

<sup>7</sup>Cato Institute analysis of global shipbuilding data, 2024; CBS News, 60 Minutes, March 22, 2026.