

United States Senate



I offer remarks to honor the men and women of the American maritime work force, and to thank them for their service. June 5th, 2020 marks the 100th Anniversary of the enactment of the U.S. Merchant Marine Act of 1920. Commonly referred to as the Jones Act, the Act has served over the last century as the foundation of the Great Lakes and domestic shipping industry. This vital maritime law ensures that cargo moving between domestic ports is carried aboard vessels that are American-built, American-owned, and American-flagged, which in turn strengthens and supports U.S. homeland security while driving economic benefits to local communities. Each and every day, 365 days a year, the Jones Act functions to protect our nation's 95,000 miles of coastline and inland waterways, limiting inland access to foreign vessels and crews while mariners serve as the eyes and ears to strengthen border and homeland security.

America's dependence on the Great Lakes and the seas is integral to our economic health and our sovereignty. Nowhere is this more evident than in my own state of Michigan. According to The American Maritime Partnership, Michigan's Great Lakes domestic maritime industry contributes \$2.8 billion annually to our state economy, including 12,140 jobs and \$703.6 million in worker income. With 37 deep-draft ports, Michigan has more than the seven other Great Lakes States combined.

Over the last 100 years, the men and women of the U.S. maritime workforce have also unfailingly answered the call to duty, providing vital services to support the nation in times of crisis. Their service was never clearer than during the activation of civilian merchant mariners amidst the Second World War. These men and women moved critical supplies to overseas troops and allies, while enduring the highest rate of casualties of any service. More recently our domestic maritime workforce has respond swiftly to a range of crises facing the nation, including facilitating the largest boatlift in world history following 9/11, and the current and ongoing delivery of essential medical supplies and goods to communities in need during the COVID-19 pandemic.

On this week's centennial anniversary of the Jones Act, I thank the men and women of the U.S. maritime industry for their service, and I vow to continue to work here in the Senate to uphold the integrity of the Act's protections for our Michigan and Great Lakes workforce.