President Biden Specifies Maritime
In ‘Buy American’ Executive Order
Administration Commits to Investing in U.S. Workers, Companies

Only in office for six days, President Joe Biden confirmed his career-long support for the Jones Act by specifically including the nation’s freight carriage law in his “Buy American” executive order.

Issued Jan. 25, the order states: “Reiterates the President’s strong support for the Jones Act. The President will continue to be a strong advocate for the Jones Act and its mandate that only U.S.-flag vessels carry cargo between U.S. ports, which supports American production, value added and job growth.”

With the signing of the 2021 National Defense Authorization Act, the Jones Act has also been affirmed as an opportunity to invest in America’s workers as we build offshore renewable energy, in line with the President’s goals to build our clean energy future here in America.”

SIU President Michael Sacco applauded Biden’s recognition of the importance of the Jones Act so early in his administration.

“The Jones Act provides family-supporting, quality jobs to not just mariners but all kinds of American workers in the 50 states and Puerto Rico,” stated Sacco “President Biden stood up for American mariners as a U.S. senator and as vice president. He knows we deliver the goods around the country and the world.”

The executive order calls for federal dollars to be spent on goods made by American workers using domestic content. It also attempts to close loopholes that have allowed jobs and production to be shipped out of the country.

The Jones Act helps maintain nearly 650,000 American jobs across all U.S. 50 states and territories, and contributes $154 billion to the nation’s economic growth annually. Long backed by broad bipartisan majorities in Congress and top U.S. national security officials – including in a “Sense of Congress” in the recently enacted National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) – the Jones Act promotes the maintenance of the nation’s vital and critical supply chains, maritime infrastructure and national security objectives. We are very grateful for the administration’s strong commitment to this decision by President Biden to reaffirm the Jones Act during his first week in office demonstrates his strong support for the Jones Act during his first term.”

“While it is no surprise that the Biden Administra- tion supports critical American industries such as American maritime, this order is an extremely important and timely statement of the administration’s policy,” said American Maritime Partnership (AMP) President Mike Roberts. “With this order, American maritime will have greater confidence for the next several years to make investments in American vessels and maritime infrastructure while furthering environmental stewardship, efficiency and support of our homeland and national security objectives. We are very grateful for the administration’s support.”

In an announcement the day the directive was signed, the White House said in part: “With this order, President Biden is ensuring that when the federal government spends taxpayer dollars, they are spent on American-made goods... This Executive Order fulfills President Biden’s promise to reliably serve our nation’s economy and meet the needs of those we reliably serve,” said Tom Crowley, chairman and CEO of SIU-contracted Crowley Maritime Corporation.

“The Jones Act is one of the nation’s strongest ‘Buy American’ laws and when you support it, you support American maritime jobs, and the entire American maritime industry, which is a critical component of our national economy and security,” said Richard Balzano, CEO, Dredging Contractors of America.

Capt. Don Marcus, president of the International Organization of Masters, Mates & Pilots, said: “We enthusiastically applaud this decision by President Biden to reaffirm his support for the Jones Act as a component of his administration’s commitment to strong Buy America policies. His expression of support sends a clear message that the domestic maritime industry and the thousands of union members contribute to the growth of our nation’s economy and meeting the needs of those we reliably serve.”

“We applaud ‘Buy American’ as it recognizes our U.S. maritime workers who are committed to serving and securing our nation’s critical supply chains,” said George W. Pasha IV of SIU-contracted Pasha Hawaii and The Pasha Group.

“President Biden’s quick, decisive action in supporting the Jones Act during his first week in office demonstrates his strong commitment to the 650,000 Americans working in the domestic maritime industry,” said James L. Henry, chairman, Transportation Institute.

“This will issuance of this executive order emphasizing ‘Buy American’ is an affirmation of President Biden’s longstanding support of policies that promote the domestic maritime industry. We applaud this recognition of the important role our industry plays in supporting American jobs, contributing to the growth of our nation’s economy and meeting the needs of those we reliably serve,” said Tom Nolan, president and CEO of Seafarers-contracted TOTE, LLC.

The order begins: “The dollars the federal government spends on goods and services are a powerful tool to support American workers and manufacturers. Contracting alone accounts for nearly $680 billion in federal spending. Federal law requires government agencies to give preferences to American firms, however, these preferences have not always been implemented consistently or effectively. And, some of these requirements, which shape how the government prefers domestic goods and services in what it buys, have not been substantially updated since 1954. During the Eisenhower Administration. It is long overdue that the U.S. government utilizes the full force of current domestic preferences to support American workers and businesses, strengthening our economy, supporting our workers, and communities across the country.”

The President is taking action to reset the U.S. government’s longstanding approach to domestic preferences to create an approach that will build America’s future for years to come and grow quality, union jobs...
The government’s annual report on union membership in the United States didn’t necessarily include any big surprises. Published each year by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the most recent document showed a decline in overall union membership (undoubtedly caused at least in part by the pandemic) and an increase in the percentage of workers belonging to unions. That’s because more unrepresented workers were laid off when the pandemic hit (naturally, since there are more non-union workers).

But, secondly, the overall number of union members would be a lot higher if there weren’t so much illegal interference in many organizing campaigns. Reliable polling from the last few years has shown historically high, favorable views of organized labor. Most people would join a union if given a chance. Yet the membership numbers basically fluctuate only a little from year to year, sometimes increasing, sometimes declining.

The remedy is contained in legislation recently reintroduced in both the House and Senate. The Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act aims to level the playing field in representation elections. The reason our country needs this bill is because our labor laws have slowly but steadily eroded over many decades. It has become the norm for employers to get away with bending or breaking the rules during organizing campaigns, to the point where it’s blatantly unfair to the employees. This isn’t about forcing people to join a union, because no one wants that. But workers should have a fair chance to decide for themselves, free from threats by the company, free from captive-audience meetings, and free from retribution by the employer.

We have a real opportunity to get this legislation passed, and the AFL-CIO has identified it as a top priority. President Biden, a self-proclaimed “union guy” whom we’ve worked with for many years, supports the bill. As a topic, labor-law reform probably sounds boring. What’s important, though, is the results it will generate: better wages, safer workplaces, and a stronger voice for all workers.

This is long overdue, and the SIU will do our part to help make it happen.

More on Vaccines

As we all continue learning about COVID-19 vaccines, I’m repeating a recent message, for anyone who missed it. There is no doubt the vaccines are effective, but that doesn’t mean there isn’t still plenty of questions about them. Will we be advised to take them every year? Will they protect against all the different strains of the virus? Like I said, there’s no shortage of questions.

But the vaccines approved by our government work, and that’s why I’ve been signed up and ready to get my shots for a while. I have no personal hesitation whatsoever. The SIU will take a sensible, fair approach as vaccines become more readily available. We will respect individual rights while also taking the most prudent steps to protect ourselves, from threats by the company, free from captive-audience meetings, and free from retribution by the employer.

As experts learn more about how COVID-19 vaccination may help to reduce the spread of the disease, CDC will continue to use the latest science to update the recommendations for protecting communities.

The union’s tallying committee consisted of 29 Seafarers (two members elected from each of the SIU’s 10 constitutional halls). The group certified the results of Michael Sacco as president of the SIU; Augie Tellez as the union’s executive vice president; David Heindel as secretary treasurer; and George Tricker as vice president of contracts and contract enforcement, among other results.

The tallying committee’s report will be submitted for approval by the membership in March.

According to the report, the two contested races for office were decided by large margins. The committee disclosed the election of the following officers, who will serve four-year terms:

- Todd Breck, executive vice president;
- Ray Henderson, New York/New Jersey port agent;
- John Hoskins, Baltimore port agent;
- Mark Butler, Charleston port agent;
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- Mark Butler, Charleston port agent; and
- Nick Marrone, Oakland port agent.

The original MSIBs are also included in a Dec. 28, 2020 news post on the SIU website. The new administration’s cabinet is taking shape, and it includes pro-maritime, pro-worker nominees.

On Jan. 8, then-President-elect Joe Biden chose Marty Walsh and patron of the Laborers Union Local 223 Walsh as his U.S. Labor Secretary. Walsh knows that collective bargaining is essential to building back better by combating inequality, beating COVID-19 and expanding opportunities for immigrants, women and people of color. He will be the fourth labor secretary for the same reason he was an outstanding mayor: He carried this country.

Walsh will be the latest in a long line of union leaders who have held the position ofsecretary of labor. Martin Van Buren, his political hero, was the first.

When Van Buren took office in 1837, the labor movement was still in its infant stages. Now, nearly 180 years later, the movement has grown exponentially. Union leaders like Walsh are essential to building back better and ensuring that the nation’s workers are protected.

The committee said, “We can defend workers’ rights, we can strengthen collective bargaining. We can grow union membership. We can create millions of good-paying jobs with investments in infrastructure, clean energy, and in high-tech manufacturing, along with the workforce training to help get those people into those good jobs.”

In light of the COVID-19 global pandemic, extra precautions were taken not only before and during the election itself, but also throughout the committee’s work. All committee members were required to test negative for the novel coronavirus, and they also had to isolate before traveling to Piney Point. Additionally, two alternating members from each constitutional port were also chosen by fellow members during special meetings Dec. 28 (none ultimately were needed to fill in).

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Bill Aims for Fairness in Organizing Drives

The PRO Act is back. Voiced during the pro-worker and pro-labor law legislation in more than 85 years, the bill was reintroduced on Feb. 4 by House and Senate Democratic leaders.

The House passed the same bill—Protecting the Right to Organize Act 2021—during the 117th Congress, but the Senate never concluded floor hearings on the bill. President Biden tweeted his support for the legislation, which would overturn decades of anti-worker court and National Labor Relations Board rulings, and make organizing, winning elections and bargaining on fair terms easier for workers and employees. It would also increase fines for corporate labor-law-breaking, make court elections of labor leaders easier and fairer for workers. It would also make organizing, winning elections and bargaining on fair terms easier for workers and employees.

The PRO Act is organized labor’s top priority, after coronavirus economic aid, in the new Biden-Harris administration and the Democratic-run Congress. History has shown that when the Right to Organize Act passes, workers and employees will find it easier to unionize, benefiting economic growth, stability and security, building a middle-class economy where workers and employees are not squeezed by outsourcing, wage theft, modern-day sweatshops, or changes in working conditions. Organized labor has grown since the PRO Act was introduced decades ago. This is a labor law that is needed today. The PRO Act is the long-overdue labor law that is needed today. The PRO Act is the labor law that is needed today.