



# THE FEDERAL MARINER

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## 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 cabotage 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 and America's workers. 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.

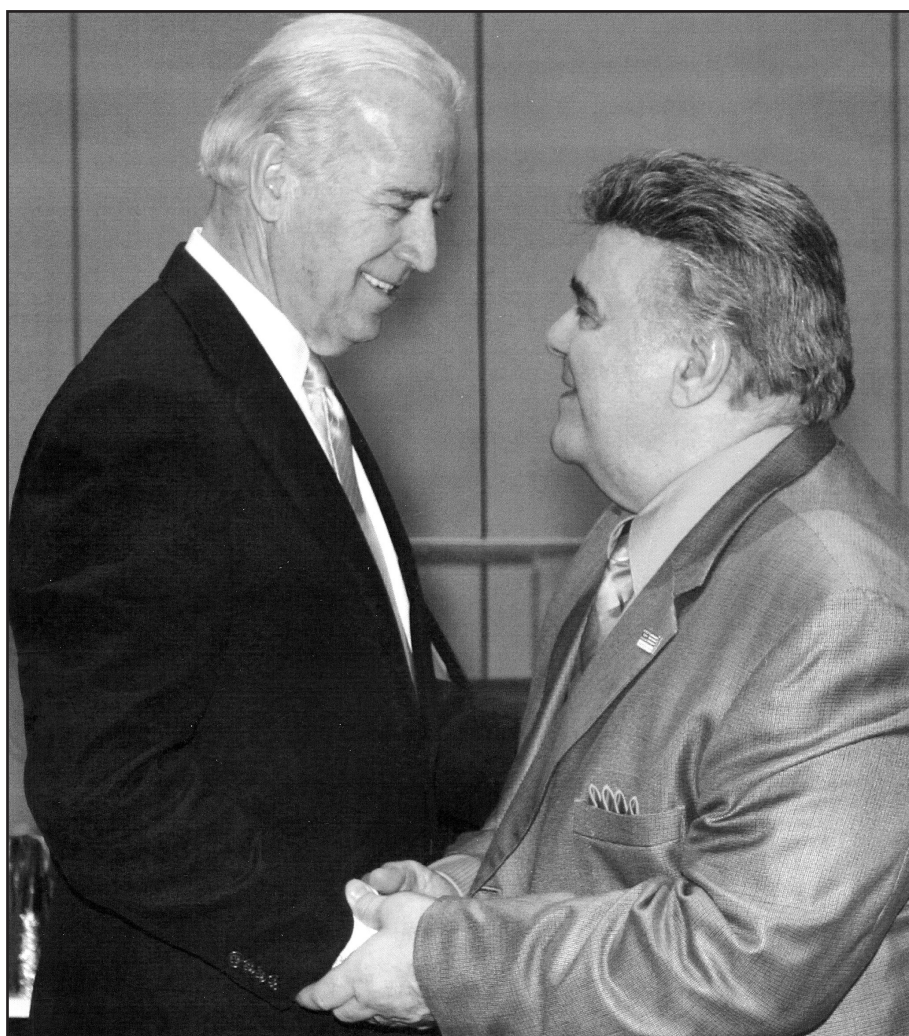
"The Jones Act provides family-supporting, quality jobs to not just mariners but all kinds of American workers in the 50 states and Puerto Rico," stated Sacco. "President Biden stood up for American mariners as a U.S. senator and as vice president. He knows we deliver the goods around the country and 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 vitally important maritime industrial base, ensuring that American jobs are not shipped overseas and that defense capabilities and readiness aren't outsourced to foreign nations.

"While it is no surprise that the Biden Administration 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 make Buy American real and close loopholes that allow com-



SIU President Michael Sacco (right) greets then-United States Vice President Joe Biden in early 2009, at a meeting of the AFL-CIO Executive Council.

panies to offshore production and jobs while still qualifying for domestic preferences.

"President Biden's executive action will ensure that the federal government is investing taxpayer dollars in American businesses – both small and large. These investments will help create well-paid, union jobs, and build our economy back better so that everybody has a fair shot at the middle class. They will buy from all of America – including minority entrepreneurs and businesses in every region in our country. And, they will support the manufacturing capabilities and technology needed to build a clean energy future and strengthen our national security, and give our workers and companies the tools they need to compete globally for decades to come."

Reaction throughout the U.S. maritime industry was quick and overwhelmingly positive.

American Maritime Officers National President Paul Doell stated, "The Jones Act is in and of itself the ideal example of 'Buy American' in principle and in practice."

"We applaud President Biden and his administration for moving aggressively to grow the U.S. maritime industry. Working together,

we will put America on a road to recovery and prosperity," 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 men and women who build and operate these vessels are critical to the economic and military security of our nation."

"The White House has taken unprecedented action that supports the Great Lakes economy and homeland security. This execu-

tive order creates jobs and protects the pilot light of the nation's manufacturing base, which is the Great Lakes maritime industry," said Jim Weakley, president, Lake Carriers' Association.

"The Biden Administration's strong support for the Jones Act recognizes the cornerstone of our American maritime policy, which has worked for over a century in strengthening our national and economic security," said Adam Vokac, president, Marine Engineers' Beneficial Association.

"Speaking for the 2,000 essential workers at Matson, who have worked through uncertainty and the daily realities of a pandemic to ensure that our most remote American communities and military installations in Hawaii, Alaska and Guam receive uninterrupted delivery of the food and supplies they need to sustain everyday life, hearing this support from the White House means a lot," said Matt Cox, chairman and CEO of Seafarers-contracted Matson, Inc.

"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.

"The swift 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 Tim 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 \$600 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 preferences 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 America's workers and businesses, strengthening our economy, 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 remain durable for years to come and grow quality, union jobs...."



## President's Column

### Union is Strength

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).



Michael Sacco

Beyond the specific numbers, a couple of items jump out at me. One, union members continue to earn more money on average and enjoy better benefits than their unrepresented counterparts. This has been the case with every report for as long as I can remember.

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 aren'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 you, your shipmates and your families.

Meanwhile, keep your guard up and follow the safety protocols that probably are becoming second nature by now. I've been saying for almost a year, we'll get through this pandemic together. We're getting closer and we've got to stay vigilant.

## SIU Directory

Michael Sacco, President

Augustin Tellez, Executive Vice President

David Heindel, Secretary-Treasurer

George Tricker, Vice President Contracts

Kate Hunt,

Vice President Government Services

Joe Vincenzo,

Asst. Vice President Government Services



Union shipyard General Dynamics NASSCO launches the *USNS John Lewis* in San Diego. (Photo courtesy General Dynamics NASSCO)

## NASSCO Launches USNS John Lewis

New jobs are on the horizon for members of the SIU Government Services Division following the Jan. 12 launch of the future *USNS John Lewis* in San Diego.

The launch took place at General Dynamics NASSCO in San Diego, a union shipyard.

The *Lewis* is the first of six vessels in a new fleet oiler program designed to support the U.S. Navy.

Vessel construction began in the fall of 2018 and utilized more than 18,575 tons of steel to complete. The 742-foot-long vessel is designed to transfer fuel to U.S. Navy carrier strike group ships operating at sea. Each of the oilers in this class will have a capacity of 157,000 barrels of oil, a significant dry cargo capacity, aviation capability and up to a speed of 20 knots.

"NASSCO is immensely honored to be a part of this historic day launching the future *John Lewis*,"

said Dave Carver, president of General Dynamics NASSCO. "This ship reaffirms our nation's stability and represents the same strength, values and honor that her namesake, the Honorable John Lewis, stood for. The shipbuilders of NASSCO are proud to ensure his legacy will live on in this majestic vessel."

Additionally, NASSCO started construction on the future *USNS Earl Warren*, the third vessel in the program, late last year.

In 2016, General Dynamics NASSCO was awarded the contract by the U.S. Navy for the detailed design and construction of the next generation of fleet oilers, the John Lewis-class (T-AO 205), previously known as the TAO(X).

According to the shipyard, the christening of the future *USNS John Lewis* "will be celebrated later in 2021 with the ship's sponsor following tradition of breaking a champagne bottle on the ship's hull."

## CDC Dubs COVID-19 Vaccines Safe, Effective

*Editor's note: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently posted the following information.*

#### You can help stop the pandemic by getting a COVID-19 vaccine.

To stop this pandemic, we need to use all our prevention tools. Vaccines are one of the most effective tools to protect your health and prevent disease. Vaccines work with your body's natural defenses so your body will be ready to fight the virus if you are exposed (also called "immunity").

In the coming months, doctors' offices, retail pharmacies, hospitals, and clinics will offer COVID-19 vaccine. Your doctor's office or local pharmacy may have contacted you with information about their vaccine plans. If not, you can contact your state or local health department to find out when and where vaccines will be available in your community.

#### COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective

The U.S. vaccine safety system makes sure that all vaccines are as safe as possible. Learn how the federal government is working to ensure the safety of COVID-19 vaccines.

CDC has developed a new tool, v-safe, to help us quickly find any safety issues with COVID-19 vaccines. V-safe is a smartphone-based, after-vaccination health checker for people who receive

COVID-19 vaccines. Download the v-safe app after you are vaccinated!

Studies show that COVID-19 vaccines are very effective at keeping you from getting COVID-19. Experts also think that getting a COVID-19 vaccine may help keep you from getting seriously ill even if you do get COVID-19. These vaccines cannot give you the disease.

#### COVID-19 vaccine will be free for you.

The federal government is providing the vaccine free of charge to people living in the United States. However, your vaccination provider may bill your insurance company, Medicaid, or Medicare for an administration fee.

#### After COVID-19 vaccination, you may have some side effects. These are normal signs that your body is building protection.

The side effects from COVID-19 vaccination may feel like flu and might even affect your ability to do daily activities. Most of these side effects should go away in a few days.

#### You will still need to wear a mask and socially distance after getting each shot of the vaccine for now.

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

### How to Become an SIU Member

Joining the SIU is easy and an important step in protecting your workplace rights. The union's website – [www.seafarers.org](http://www.seafarers.org) – includes printable PDF versions of forms that mariners may use to request and authorize payroll deductions for labor organization dues. The forms are posted at:

<https://www.seafarers.org/news/labor-maritime-news/civmar-news/>  
Forms are also available under "SIU Forms" in the ABOUT tab.

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# Tallying Committee Announces Election Results

## Michael Sacco is Reelected President of Seafarers International Union

A committee of rank-and-file members recently released its official report on the voting for national officers of the Seafarers International Union’s Atlantic, Gulf, Lakes and Inland Waters. Voting took place Nov. 1 through Dec. 31, 2020.

The union’s tallying committee consisted of 20 Seafarers (two members elected from each of the SIU’s 10 constitutional halls). The group certified the reelections 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 at union meetings 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:

- Michael Sacco, president;
- Augie Tellez, executive vice president;
- David Heindel, secretary-treasurer;
- George Tricker, contracts and contract enforcement vice president;

- Joseph Soresi, Atlantic Coast vice president;
- Dean Corgey, Gulf Coast vice president;
- Nick Marrone, West Coast vice president;
- Tom Orzechowski, Southern Region, Great Lakes and inland waters vice president;
- Kate Hunt, Government Services and fishing industries vice president;
- Pat Vandegrift, contracts and contract enforcement assistant vice president;
- Nick Celona, Atlantic Coast assistant vice president;
- Kris Hopkins, Gulf Coast assistant vice president;
- Bryan Powell, West Coast assistant vice president;
- Mike Russo, Southern Region, Great Lakes and inland waters assistant vice president;
- Joe Vincenzo, Government Services and fishing industries assistant vice president;
- Mark von Siegel, Piney Point port agent;
- Ray Henderson, New York/New Jersey port agent;
- Joe Baselice, Philadelphia port agent;

- John Hoskins, Baltimore port agent;
- Jimmy White, Mobile port agent;
- Chris Westbrook, New Orleans port agent;
- Joe Zavala, Houston port agent;
- Nick Marrone II, Oakland port agent;
- Chad Partridge, St. Louis port agent;
- Todd Brdak, Detroit-Algonac port agent.

The committee met with the union’s secretary-treasurer to receive instructions following the Piney Point, Maryland, membership meeting on Jan. 4 and concluded both their tallying and report by the evening of January 7. They met during that week at the union’s headquarters in Camp Springs, Maryland, and at the SIU-affiliated school in Piney Point.

Serving as co-chairmen of the tallying committee were **Jack McElveen** and **Timothy Pillsworth**, both of whom credited their fellow Seafarers for being thorough and efficient. Joining them on the committee were Seafarers **Ritche Acuman, Mark Butler, Patrick Coppola, James Crate, Fontanos Ellison, Anthony Jacobson, Trevor Manion, Mohamed Mosed, Foaad Saleh, Joe Bowen, Cleofe Castro, Gerard Costello, Riley Donahue, Rene Guity, Kelvin**

**Johnson, Kyle Miller, Exxl Ronquillo and Tyrell Thabit.**

Unanimously approved by the committee, the report consists of more than 5,800 words. It reflects a strong rank-and-file turnout for balloting. The committee members concluded that they “wish to express [our] deep appreciation for the cooperation and assistance given to us by the union’s legal department and its technical and clerical staff. Finally, the members of the union tallying committee wish to congratulate the elected officers and jobholders. We extend our best wishes for the next four years. We hope that you will carry on the tradition of our union and advance the strength of the maritime industry.”

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 alternates from each constitutional port also were chosen by fellow members during special meetings Dec. 28 (none ultimately were needed to fill in).

## Notice Concerning Recent Marine Safety Info. Bulletins

*The U.S. Coast Guard’s National Maritime Center has circulated multiple Marine Safety Information Bulletins (MSIB) that are relevant to many SIU members. Updates from those bulletins follow. The original MSIBs are also linked on the SIU website.*

### TWIC Extension

As laid out in Maritime Safety Information Bulletin number 13-20, “For mariners already holding a Merchant Marine Credential (MMC), if their Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC) expires, and their credential remains valid, then no action needs to be taken and the credential re-

mains valid.” This means that, as long as your MMC is not suspended or revoked, the Coast Guard will not pursue any suspension and revocation actions based on expired TWICs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### MMC/STCW Extension

Mariners whose MMC expires between March 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021 are extended one year after the initial expiration date of the credential or until Oct. 31, 2021, whichever is earlier. According to the NMC, “**Mariners must carry copy of the relevant Marine Safety Information Bulletin (MSIB) along with their expired MMC.**” (It’s

contained in a Dec. 28, 2020 news post on the SIU website, and that post includes a link to the PDF version.)

### Revalidation/Training Waivers

Until Oct. 31, 2021, for mariners who have met the requirements for initial competency and whose MMC expires between March 01, 2020 and June 30, 2021, if you have 360 days of relevant sea time in the past five years, you do not need to take any revalidation courses. (Relevant sea time means: shipboard experience in fire, emergency, and/or abandon ship drills for demonstrating continued competence in Proficiency in Survival Craft, Proficiency in Survival Craft-Limited, Fast Rescue Boat, Basic Training and/or Advanced Firefighting. Service is determined as described in Navigation and Vessel Inspection Circulars (NVICs) 4-14, 05-14, 08-14 and 09-14.)

International endorsements affected include Basic Training (VI/1), Fast Rescue Boat (VI/2), Basic Training/Adv. Firefighting (VI/3) and Personal Survival Craft (PSC) (VI/2).

If you qualify for this training waiver and your MMC falls within the above dates, you should renew your MMC immediately. You should be issued a renewed MMC with a five-year expiration date and will NOT be required to attend any revalidation training. All other renewal requirements must be met (i.e., if you hold a Tanker-DL or LG endorsement you must meet the sea time or training requirement to renew that endorsement).

### How to Renew

To renew your credentials online, visit: [https://www.dco.uscg.mil/nmc/merchant\\_mariner\\_credential/](https://www.dco.uscg.mil/nmc/merchant_mariner_credential/) and follow the instructions listed for renewal.

## Biden Taps Pro-Worker Nominees for Pair of Key Cabinet Positions

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 Boston Mayor and former president of the Laborers Union Local 223 Marty Walsh as his U.S. Labor Secretary.

AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka said in a statement, “Boston Mayor Marty Walsh will be an exceptional labor secretary for the same reason he was an outstanding mayor: He carried the tools. As a longtime union member, 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 have the ear of the White House, the cabinet and Congress as we work to increase union density and create a stronger, fairer America.... Marty Walsh has always been a fighter who understands the power of working people standing together for a better life.”

According to Biden, “Marty understands, like I do, that the middle class built this country and unions built the middle class. He sees how union workers have been holding this country together during this crisis.”

During his confirmation hearing, Walsh told senators that he grew up in a union family, and the health insurance his father had through the union paid for Walsh’s medical care through a bout with childhood lymphoma and helping him beat alcoholism. The experience “informs my deep beliefs in the mission of the Labor Department” and the value of unions, he said.

Walsh stated, “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.”

If confirmed, the former mayor is the first union cardholder serving as U.S. Labor Secretary in approximately 50 years.

On Dec. 13, Biden announced his nomination for U.S. Secretary of Transportation as former Mayor Pete Buttigieg.

“Jobs, infrastructure, equity, and climate all come together at the DOT, the site of some of our most ambitious plans to build back better,” Biden said in the announcement. “I trust Mayor Pete to lead this work with focus, decency, and a bold vision – he will bring people together to get big things done.... We selected Pete for transportation because the department is at the intersection of some of our most ambitious plans.”

Buttigieg accepted the nomination, saying, “Americans shouldn’t settle for less than our peers in the developed world when it comes to our roads and bridges, railways, and transit systems. The U.S. should lead the way, and in

this administration, we will.” He was confirmed in February.

Buttigieg quickly went on record with praise for the Jones Act during his confirmation hearing, saying in response to a question from Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-Washington), “I share your support for the Jones Act. It is so important to a maritime industry that creates hundreds of thousands of jobs and the shipbuilding industry here in the United States.”

Buttigieg was confirmed by the Senate in a bipartisan 86-13 vote on Feb. 2. At press time, Walsh’s nomination has not yet been acted upon by the Senate.

While a Maritime Administrator has yet to be nominated, Lucinda Lessley has been appointed to the position of Deputy Maritime Administrator, and is the Acting Administrator. Previously, Lessley worked in the House of Representatives for approximately 16 years. Most recently, she was Senior Investigator with the House Committee on Homeland Security.



# Strong Maritime Support Evident in House Hearing

## Panelists to Congress: Prioritize U.S. Mariners for COVID-19 Vaccination

While the subject matter is complicated, the upshot from a recent House hearing is crystal clear: America relies on a strong U.S. Merchant Marine, and with that in mind, the industry deserves prioritization during the pandemic.

Many other pro-maritime comments were voiced Feb. 9 during a hearing titled, “State of the U.S. Maritime Industry: Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic.” The hearing was conducted by the Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation of the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee. Several House members were present in the hearing room in the nation’s capital, while others participated remotely, as did the panelists.

Testifying were Crowley Maritime Senior Vice President Mike Roberts, on behalf of the American Maritime Partnership (AMP, to which the SIU is affiliated); Jim Patti, president of Maritime Institute for Research And Industrial Development, on behalf of USA Maritime (also an SIU affiliate); Mario Cordero, chairman of the board of directors, American Association of Port Authorities; Ben Bordelon, chairman of the Shipbuilders Council of America; Lauren K. Brand, president of the National Association of Waterfront Employers; and Del Wilkins, president, Illinois Marine Towing.

In respective opening statements, U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-Oregon), chair of the full committee, and U.S. Rep. Salud Carbajal (D-California), subcommittee chairman, expressed unwavering support for the industry.

DeFazio stated, “In the year since the virus was first detected in the United States, the maritime industry has endured significant hardships and has experienced substantial impacts to business.

It is vitally important that this committee understand how the pandemic has affected the reliability and efficiency of our maritime industry and its workers, the gaps that still exist in protecting the workforce from the virus, the lessons that have been learned from the federal government’s response to the pandemic so far, and potential next steps to better protect the maritime industry and workforce from COVID-19 and any future public health crisis we may confront....

“The situation is complicated by the fact that certain portions of the industry were not faring well before the pandemic,” he continued. “The internationally trading fleet for instance, has shrunk to a paltry 85 vessels and carries less than 1.5% of the goods entering and exiting our ports. Without a robust U.S.-flag maritime industry, we would not have the mariners needed to go to war or supply our internationally deployed members of the military.... The economy cannot recover without a working maritime supply chain.”

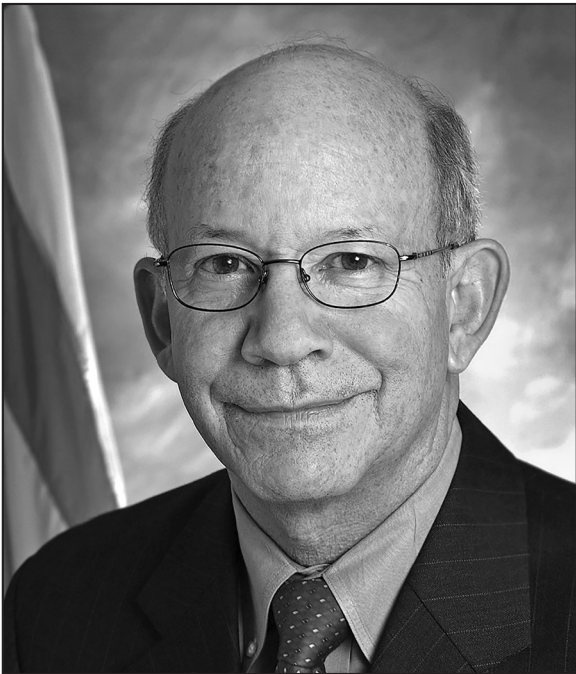
Carbajal briefly reviewed the key components of American-flag shipping and then added his support for the nation’s freight cabotage law.

“The Merchant Marine Act of 1920 or Jones Act safeguards our country and economy and provides guaranteed work to American merchant mariners; ensuring government and civilian goods, people and equipment are carried by U.S.-flagged ships and U.S. citizens,” he said. “In my district, which encompasses Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties, and portions of Ventura County, maritime and seafaring is an essential way of life.”

He also noted that throughout the pandemic, vessel operators “have had to shoulder the burden of the increased costs of new safety measures, acquiring protective gear and complying with public health measures while other industries have received federal assistance. Requests for assistance have gone unanswered while demand on our ports and cargo carrying U.S. fleet only increases as American commerce increases. I applaud President Biden for affirming support for the Jones Act; the industry needs strong federal support in order to weather this storm.”

Roberts, speaking for the coalition that represents all segments of the domestic maritime industry, mentioned that the Jones Act supports around 650,000 American jobs while contributing \$150 billion each year to the nation’s economy.

“The reason we have a Jones Act can be encompassed in one word – security,” Roberts stated. “The coastwise laws of the U.S. are essential to the continued economic security of the U.S. transportation system and to the maintenance of a U.S.-flag fleet to support that system. The Jones Act ensures that American mariners are constantly on the watch on our inland waterways, promoting homeland security. And finally, the



U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio  
(D-Oregon)



U.S. Rep. Salud Carbajal  
(D-California)

Jones Act is critical to ensuring that our country has both the mariners and the sealift capacity to go to war, which is essential to our national security.

“The value of the Jones Act is even clearer during this pandemic,” he continued. “As can be seen by the breakdown of the supply chain for basic medical goods at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, America cannot be wholly dependent on foreign countries for our basic needs. The Jones Act ensures that America will have the ability to transport our own goods by water and a defense industrial base that is not hamstrung by unfair foreign competition. Today’s domestic U.S.-flag fleet has proven its capabilities to meet the demands of the pandemic, and our mariners have risen to the call of their essential worker status.”

Roberts said that while American mariners and vessels will continue to deliver, “there is more the government can do to support America’s maritime frontline workers to help keep them safe and able to keep domestic supply chains intact.”

He said the emergence of the offshore wind industry holds great promise for American-flag shipping, and then pivoted to China’s investment in maritime.

“China’s shipping and shipbuilding industries have experienced dramatic growth in recent years, fueled by its export economy and extraordinary support from the Chinese government,” Roberts noted. “The result is a Chinese commercial maritime industry that puts U.S. national security interests at risk both in peacetime and in the event of conflict. Americans have learned during the pandemic that depending on China for face masks and other critical supplies is not in our country’s best interest. America must develop a thoughtful and effective policy response to China’s maritime ambitions. A growing number of experts and scholars have begun to do this, and have found, among other things, that the starting place for such a policy is to reinforce and expand support for the American domestic maritime industry and the Jones Act.”

Roberts said in regard to the pandemic, the most important step requested by the industry as a whole is “to prioritize mariners for the COVID-19 vaccination and, in the interim, ensure that mariners have access to rapid testing. We were grateful that the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency recognized the importance of the maritime industry and ensured that maritime workers were broadly covered as part of the critical infrastructure guidance released in March. That recognition allowed the industry to continue operating but did nothing to help reduce the risk of coronavirus exposure while continuing the work. We also appreciate very much that Federal Maritime

Commissioners Maffei and Bentzel recently urged the Biden Administration to prioritize mariners for vaccination and rapid testing, emphasizing the mariner’s critical role in moving medical supplies, personal protective equipment, and handling an unprecedented amount of consumer goods flowing into our nation’s ports. But that is not enough. It is past time that the federal and state government agencies having direct input and actual authority over mariner safety do likewise.”

Patti spoke on behalf of a coalition whose members include shipping companies operating vessels in the U.S. Maritime Security Program (MSP).

He said, “The development and implementation of programs and policies that support this fleet, enhance its economic viability and enable it to compete for a larger share of America’s foreign trade are extremely important to our ability to support the economic and military security of our country.”

After quickly recapping the merchant marine’s role as America’s fourth arm of defense and then touching on the general state of the industry, Patti turned to the global COVID-19 crisis.

“Since the onset of the pandemic, maritime labor and their U.S.-flag shipping companies have been working with each other as well as with a number of federal agencies and departments, including the Maritime Administration, the United States Coast Guard, the United States Transportation Command, the Department of State, the Federal Maritime Commission and others to put in place the measures that help protect the lives of American mariners and ensure that the essential economic and defense services provided by our industry remain available,” he stated. “The support given to our industry by these and other federal agencies is greatly appreciated.

“While over the past 11 months safety practices and protocols have been developed and put in place within our industry there are still COVID-19 related issues that need to be resolved,” he continued. “Most importantly, while we clearly understand and appreciate that there are many segments of the American workforce who need expedited access to the COVID-19 vaccine, it is extremely important that American mariners and cadets working aboard Maritime Security Program vessels and other U.S.-flag vessels in the foreign trades receive such access. Otherwise, with the differences in vaccine administration procedures among the states, it may be months at the earliest before mariners receive a vaccine.”

Patti then detailed why mariners should be prioritized, reiterating their status as essential workers and the nature of the work itself in supporting U.S. economic and national security.

## Bill Aims for Fairness In Organizing Drives

The PRO Act is back.

Viewed as the most pro-worker labor law legislation in more than 85 years, the bill formally was introduced Feb. 4 by House and Senate Democratic leaders.

The House passed the same bill (Protecting the Right to Organize Act) during the prior Congress, but the Senate never conducted a hearing on it.

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 first contracts easier and fairer for employees. It would also increase fines for corporate labor law-breaking, make court orders against violators easier to obtain, and void the labor law provision that approves so-called “right to work” laws.

The PRO Act is organized labor’s top priority, after coronavirus economic aid, in

the new Biden-Harris administration and the Democratic-run Congress.

“Every American deserves the dignity and respect that comes with the right to union organize and collectively bargain,” Biden tweeted. “The policy of our government is to encourage union organizing, and employers should ensure their workers have a free and fair choice to join a union.”

AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka hailed the measure’s introduction, while warning Democrats it’s time to back up their words with deeds and pass it. He added workers would mobilize for support.

“We will make our case in every state and every congressional district, to elected leaders across the political spectrum,” Trumka said. “But make no mistake, this is a test for Democrats. After decades of dis-appointment, it’s time for the party of FDR to finish what he started.”

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-California), Senate Majority Leader Charles Schumer (D-New York) and House Education and Labor Committee Chair Bobby Scott (D-Virginia) promptly jumped on board after Senate Labor Committee Chair Patty Murray (D-Washington) unveiled the PRO Act.

Retired Americans Executive Director Richard Fiesta noted, “Employers are now routinely denying workers their basic right to join with co-workers for fairness on the job, and the ability to negotiate for better pay and benefits has eroded. It is no surprise that more and more Americans feel squeezed financially and are afraid that a secure retirement is out of reach. We must update labor laws so everyone can safely organize and join a union.”

Neither Murray nor Scott set hearing dates for the legislation.