

# The Maritime Executive Magazine :: U.S. Navy Opposes Congressional Efforts to Repeal the Jones Act

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*Cites importance of American Mariners U.S. Shipbuilding Industrial Base, and American Vessels*

The news that the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Navy League support the Jones Act and oppose its repeal was applauded today by Maritime Cabotage Task Force ("MCTF"), the national coalition representing the U.S.-flag fleet engaged in domestic waterborne commerce. Both organizations dedicated to the defense of the United States have reaffirmed their support for the law, which is directly responsible for half a million U.S. jobs and vital to national security.

In response to anti-Jones Act legislation introduced earlier this year, the U.S. Navy said, "For decades, U.S. merchant mariners have provided essential support for the U.S. Navy during times of war and national crisis. Repealing the Jones Act would remove that support at a time when we are fighting two wars and facing a continuing threat from international terrorism."

The statement comes within days of comments from Daniel B. Branch, Jr., president of the Navy League of the United States, highlighting the importance of a "strong commercial maritime industry" to a "maritime nation [like] the United States."

The Jones Act establishes a U.S. merchant marine of skilled seafarers and U.S.-flagged ships essential for maintaining the flow of domestic and foreign waterborne commerce that is capable of serving as a naval and military auxiliary in times of war or national emergency.

"As a maritime nation, the United States depends not only on a strong Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard, it also requires a strong commercial maritime industry," said Navy League National President Daniel B. Branch, Jr. "The Jones Act must be maintained so that the more than 8,000

U.S. citizen mariners can continue to provide the economic and military support that is critical to our national interests."

The Navy League is a non-profit civilian organization with more than 50,000 members worldwide whose mission for more than 100 years has been to educate the American people and their leaders about the enduring importance of sea power to a maritime nation, and to support the men and women of the U.S. sea services.

The Navy support for the Jones Act is nothing new. In previous Congresses, the Navy opposed Jones Act repeal legislation, noting that such legislation "adversely impacts" the military need for a strong cadre of American ships, citizen mariners, and "maritime industrial base of shipyard and repair facilities."

"The U.S. Navy and the Navy League both understand that maintaining longstanding U.S. maritime law boosts our economy and helps protect our homeland," said Mark Ruge, counsel to the MCTF. "In a time of economic uncertainty and threats to our nation, the Jones Act provides a U.S. merchant marine that promotes efficient trade and supports U.S. military and humanitarian efforts throughout the world."

Thousands of American mariners have played a critical role cleaning up oil in the Gulf of Mexico. Jones Act vessels involved in the cleanup have included scores of the world's largest and best equipped oil spill response vessels, dozens of technologically advanced offshore supply vessels, as well as thousands of fishing boats and other vessels of opportunity.

The Jones Act maritime industry annually generates 500,000 jobs, contributes \$100 billion in total economic output, adds \$46 billion to the value of U.S. economic output, provides \$29 billion in wages, and contributes \$11 billion in taxes.

*Maritime Cabotage Task Force was founded in 1995 to promote the U.S.-flag fleet engaged in domestic waterborne commerce. With more than 400 members, MCTF is the largest coalition ever assembled to represent the domestic segment of the U.S. Merchant Marine. Nationwide, there are more than 39,000 vessels engaged in Jones Act commerce and they annually move more than 1 billion tons of cargo and 100 million passengers. The Act has been broadly supported by every Congress and Administration since its passage in 1920 and is considered a key element in the nation's defense capabilities. For additional information on the U.S. Maritime Cabotage Task Force, please visit <http://www.mctf.com>.*