

LOUISIANA



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

April 11, 2017

Via email: Response@cbp.dhs.gov

Mr. Glen E. Vereb
Director, Border Security and Trade Compliance Division
Office of Trade, Regulations and Rulings
U.S. Customs and Border Protection
90 K Street, NE
Washington, DC 20229

Dear Director Vereb:

As Members of the Louisiana State House of Representatives, we write in support of Customs and Border Protection's ("CBP") Notice in the January 18, 2017 edition of the *Customs Bulletin* entitled, "Proposed Modification and Revocation of Ruling Letters Related to Customs Application of the Jones Act to the Transportation of Certain Merchandise and Equipment between Coastwise Points" (the "Notice"). This notice shall ensure our federal laws are enforced correctly and help to protect and provide for our state's economy.

Our nation has always had a strong maritime tradition, dating back to the first cabotage law passed by Congress and signed into law in 1789. The modern iteration of this law, the Jones Act, which requires vessels transiting between two U.S. points must be U.S. crewed, U.S. owned, and U.S. built, clearly articulates the purpose of this law and the policy of our country:

It is necessary for the national defense and the development of the domestic and foreign commerce of the United States that the United States have a merchant marine . . . sufficient to carry the waterborne domestic commerce and a substantial part of the waterborne export . . . capable of serving as a naval and military auxiliary in time of war or national emergency . . . [and] capable of serving as a naval and military auxiliary in time of war or national emergency. (46 U.S.C. § 50101)

Louisiana has always benefited greatly from this law. Our state has more maritime jobs than any other state in the nation. Specifically, a recent study found that in 2014, the marine transportation and shipyard industries were responsible for 104,800 Louisiana jobs. In fact, if the maritime industry were a Louisiana parish (county), it would rank as our eight highest parish in terms of total jobs created. We understand that these jobs, and the economic benefit they provided to our state are owed to the Jones Act. As such, we support any policy which ensures the Jones Act is enforced as written.


The benefits provided by the Jones Act to Louisiana are not only economic. This law also provides a very large security benefit to our state. Our state is uniquely situated at the mouth of the Mississippi River, the Calcasieu River, the Atchafalaya River; along the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway; and as the closest point to most offshore oil and gas production fields in the Gulf of Mexico. As such, Louisiana has some of the busiest ports in the nation with three of the top ten busiest ports in American located in South Louisiana. These are in addition to the offshore energy ports located in Lafourche, Terrebonne, St. Mary, Iberia, and Cameron Parishes.


We understand that the Jones Act's requirement that the crew on vessels transiting between these ports (and offshore points) greatly lessens the security risks to our state and our constituents. Customs officials have stated that they would not be able to ensure the security of all of these miles of waterways and all of these ports if all of these vessels were crewed by foreign nationals. By ensuring the Jones Act is enforced as written the Notice will enhance the security of Louisiana and our nation.


For these reasons, we urge CBP to expedite revocation of the letter rulings listed in the 2017 Notice. Taking such action, will ensure the Jones Act is enforced as written, thereby producing opportunities for the cadets that graduate from our academy and improved safety for the industry as a whole.

We appreciate your thoughtful consideration of these comments and stand ready to answer any questions you may have or to provide additional information.


Sincerely,



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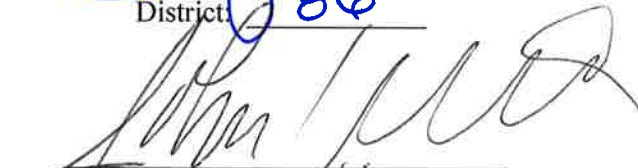

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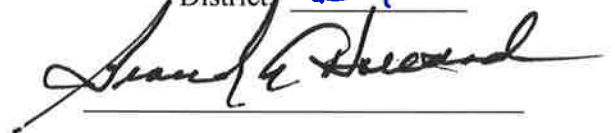

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