

# EPOCH TIMES

## To Reduce Rocketing Gas Prices, Suspend the Jones Act

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You've probably never heard of something as innocent-sounding as the century-old protectionist law called the Jones Act. It was passed as a national security measure in 1920 and prohibits foreign ships from transporting goods and services in American waters.

The world's a lot different place today than it was 100 years ago, and the law makes no sense today—from an economic or security standpoint.

Last year, Sen. Mike Lee of Utah and Rep. Tom McClintock of California introduced legislation called the Open America's Water Act, which would repeal the Jones Act and allow qualified vessels—from say Britain or Canada—to engage in domestic trade between U.S. ports.

Lee puts it like this, "It is long past time to repeal the Jones Act entirely so that Alaskans, Hawaiians, and Puerto Ricans aren't forced to pay higher prices for imported goods—and so they rapidly receive the help they need in the wake of natural disasters."

Dozens of studies have shown that even during normal times, the act adds to shipping costs and makes the supply chain problems worse—especially for those living on an island like Hawaii, which is the most petroleum-dependent (60 percent) U.S. state. A Cato Institute analysis of the Jones Act finds that the costs in terms of higher consumer prices are billions of dollars a year HIGHER than the benefit to U.S. shippers or their workers.

But these clearly ARE NOT normal times. The stampeding price spikes we are seeing for energy and food in the lower 48 states is hurting consumers. The financial squeeze for residents of Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and Alaska is much worse. Nationally, the gas price has surpassed \$4 a gallon but is already above \$5 at many service stations in Hawaii, with fears of the price climbing to as high as \$7 a gallon in the weeks ahead.

Until the inflation and Ukraine crises are over, the Jones Act should at least be temporarily suspended, for say six months or a year. Presidents have routinely waived the Jones Act during times of crisis or natural disaster, such as in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy.

But guess who OPPOSES any temporary suspension? The Biden White House. Why? Because, as always, they side with the labor bosses (in this case, the Maritime Unions) over national security and lower prices for consumers.

Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg has been making the rounds on Capitol Hill DEFENDING the Jones Act. This is the government official who is supposed to be captaining our efforts to solve our supply chain problems. Instead, the Jones Act gums up the system by limiting the number of ships that can transport cargo. Ironically, inside Washington, there is much chatter about putting Mayor Pete on top of the presidential ticket in 2024. This is how empty the talent pool is for the Dems these days.

But ultimately this decision rests with Joe Biden, not his lackeys. The White House keeps saying Biden is doing “everything he can” to reduce the price of gas. Suspending the Jones Act until at least Putin’s war machine has exited Ukraine would give urgently needed relief at the pump and grocery stores for all Americans—especially in remote areas. But he won’t, because more than 90 percent of union political donations went to Democrats.

Wouldn’t it be a breath of fresh air if he would for once put all of OUR interests ahead of those of his fat-cat campaign contributors?