



## **Puerto Rico still reeling from Hurricane Maria**

Drew Petrimouix

March 21, 2019

WASHINGTON D.C. (Nexstar)- In the wake of Hurricane Maria's destruction, Puerto Rico is asking the Trump Administration to relax a 100-year-old law to speed up recovery from the storm.

Advocates on both sides of the issue say the outcome stretches far beyond the island.

The Jones Act requires all ships that sail between U.S. ports to be built, owned, and operated by American companies.

Puerto Rico's governor says the island needs more natural gas and other supplies. He says the Jones Act restrictions are costing Puerto Rico's recovery effort, time, and money.

Colin Grabow with the Cato Institute says for the rest of us, the Jones Act restrictions drive up the price of consumer products and U.S. exports.

But American shipbuilders say the Jones Act protects hundreds of thousand U.S. jobs

Without the Jones Act, Matt Paxton, President of the Shipbuilders Council of America, says the jobs will be exported overseas.

A group of Gulf State lawmakers agree. They recently signed on to a bipartisan letter urging the Trump Administration to deny Puerto Rico's request.

Noe the shipping law has become a campaign issue. This week a coalition of 30 activists groups calling themselves "Power For Puerto Rico" wrote an open letter to 2020 presidential candidates.

Among other requests, it asks the candidates to pledge their support for the Jones Act exemption to help Puerto Rico.