

SUPPORT FOR THE JONES ACT

Since Hurricane Maria swept across Puerto Rico, wiping out most of the island's infrastructure and causing tremendous suffering, critics of the Jones Act have stepped up their attack on the law and spread misinformation about its effect on the recovery effort. In fact, Jones Act ships started transporting lifesaving goods and equipment from the mainland to the Island as soon as the main port in Puerto Rico re-opened and they continue to play a critical role in the Island's recovery.

For nearly 100 years, the Jones Act has been an indispensable part of our nation's economic and national security, ensuring that a cadre of well-trained experienced civilian mariners and a fleet of dependable ships would be available in times of war or natural disasters. It also guarantees that the maritime industry will maintain strong labor standards and protections for its workers. According to the International Transport Workers Federation, foreign-flag ships often do not enforce safety standards, minimum social standards or trade union rights, fail to pay crews and avoid compliance with environmental standards.

Puerto Rico is a growing humanitarian crisis. The Island needs massive amounts of disaster relief - everything from water and food to medical supplies and fuel and rebuilding equipment - and organized labor is committed to the reconstruction effort. AFL-CIO unions represent 100,000 Puerto Rican residents, and union members have been involved in every phase of the recovery and rebuilding effort. We have contributed not only money, but also manpower. Over three hundred skilled union volunteers -- including doctors, nurses, electricians and heavy equipment operators -- have traveled from the mainland to Puerto Rico to provide assistance.

While the distribution of lifesaving supplies is slowly improving, much of the transportation infrastructure on the island remains damaged by the storm. Repealing the Jones Act would not result in additional supplies getting to the Island, but it would jeopardize the survival of the U.S. maritime sector and along with it thousands of jobs that would be outsourced to foreign carriers.

The AFL-CIO will continue to defend U.S. shipping - and the people of Puerto Rico - from any and all attempts to weaken or repeal the Jones Act. The entire labor movement will stand together in support of U.S. mariners and their unions.

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