

Where the Candidates Stand

Where do the leading three Presidential candidates stand with regard to issues important to MM&P? To inform members about the candidates' views on three issues of crucial importance to all MM&P members, employees and their families, we report below on policy statements made by Sen. Clinton, Sen. Obama and Sen. McCain on the Jones Act, the Maritime Security Program and Cargo Preference laws.

The Jones Act

Sen. Hillary Clinton

"I am strongly committed to using American products as a way of spurring the creation of new jobs in this country. When we use American products in our coastal vessels, we spur more jobs for hardworking Americans and we guarantee that the United States is self-sufficient in constructing ships that will be needed in times of war or national emergency. The Jones Act is essential to our maritime industry, and as President, I will firmly oppose any effort to weaken the legislation." (2008)

Sen. Barack Obama

"The Jones Act is a vital part of our national defense and supports American workers. As President, I would fully enforce it. The Jones Act should be waived only under rare circumstances. I spoke out when the Bush Administration ignored the Passenger Vessel Services Act, which applies Jones Act requirements to cruise, ferry and excursion vessels, and contracted Carnival Cruise Lines, a foreign-owned company, to house evacuees from hurricane Katrina. Not only did they earn a higher-than-normal profit, but they violated Federal law in doing so. As is required by law, I will only waive the Jones Act when necessitated by national security.

"Furthermore, maintaining the American merchant marine fleet is vital to our economy and national security. I would oppose any move to undermine this Act." (2008)

Sen. John McCain

"I would like to see the Jones Act repealed, but I don't think that's likely. I don't think I would get twenty votes if I were to bring it to the floor." (1997)

"While [we] could argue about the magnitude of the cost [of the Jones Act], there is no doubt that the Jones Act adds costs to U.S. shippers, especially in areas where water transportation is the only economical shipping option, such as Hawaii, Guam and Puerto Rico." (1998)

"It appears that the Jones Act has a negative economic impact on American consumers, but more information is needed to accurately assess the magnitude of this impact, the national security value of the Jones Act, and the effects of various reform proposals." (1998)

Maritime Security Program

Sen. Clinton

“The Maritime Security Program is very important for commercial vessels when it comes to international trade. It is also critical in the event of a national defense need. As President, I will make sure that our country has a strong maritime fleet to meet the needs of our economy and our military.” (2008)

Sen. Obama

“The Maritime Security Program helps ensure U.S.-flag vessels are ready to meet our needs during times of war or national emergency and I support fully funding it. I support funding the Maritime Security Program so that it serves our nation’s national security needs. If the GAO [General Accountability Office] or another independent body finds that the MSP program needs to be expanded, I will support expanding it to the size necessary.” (2008)

Sen. McCain

“I appreciate the need for a U.S. merchant marine that we can rely on in time of national emergency. However, we have an obligation to make sure that taxpayers are not required to pay more than is necessary to meet that goal. . . . I believe we should institute a competitive procedure to determine which vessels should be included in the MSP program.” (1996)

Cargo Preference/Food for Peace

Sen. Clinton

“Yes. I support and will fully enforce existing cargo preference laws for defense and non-defense government cargo, including the PL 480 Food-for-Peace and other food aid programs. The Food-for-Peace program has sent millions of metric tons of food to hundreds of countries worldwide. Billions of people at risk of hunger have benefited from this and other food aid programs.” (2008)

Sen. Obama

“Our cargo preference laws are an important way for us to regulate and support the maritime industry. Supporting the maritime industry allows us to ensure that we have the resources we need during times of war and national emergency and maintains standards in the industry. I will continue to support cargo preference laws where they uphold our goals in shipping.” (2008)

Sen. McCain

In 1989, Sen. McCain supported an effort by Sen. Charles Grassley (R-Iowa) to exempt food aid to Poland from the cargo preference laws.

In 1990, McCain supported an attempt by Grassley to waive cargo preference if the U.S.-flag rate were more than 110 percent higher than the lowest foreign-flag rate.

In 1990, McCain supported an attempt by Sen. Steve Symms (R-Idaho) to allow the Secretary of Agriculture to waive cargo preference whenever the Secretary of Agriculture determines that cargo preference will result in a lost sale of agricultural commodities.

In 1991, McCain opposed legislation that would apply cargo preference to certain cash aid transactions.

In 1993, McCain supported a sense of the Senate resolution linking cargo preference and price gouging by U.S.-flag vessel operators.

In 1993, McCain supported an effort by Sen. Hank Brown (R-Colorado) to place a cap on the rates charged under the cargo preference program.

In 1996, McCain supported an attempt by Grassley to link the rates charged by U.S.-flag vessels under cargo preference to foreign-flag rates.