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Dear Editor:

In March *Site Selection* magazine published a short article written by Peter Zeihan titled, "Rising (Again) to Greatness" with a headline that read "The Mississippi backbone is America's past and future." The headline is correct, but Mr. Zeihan's criticism of the Jones Act is wildly off base.

The Jones Act is a fundamental pillar of the American maritime industry, requiring that cargo moving between two points in the United States be transported on vessels that are American-built, American-owned and American-crewed. The result is a high-quality, efficient domestic fleet of 40,000 commercial vessels that help drive our economy and support national security.

Mr. Zeihan's column is heavy on hyperbole but light on facts. His statement that the economic advantage of the Mississippi River system has "turned to ash" represents a complete misunderstanding of waterborne cargo movement in America today. He blames economic woes on the Jones Act, but offers no evidence to support his argument. None.

Here are the facts. The Jones Act is critical to sustaining an industry that supports over 500,000 jobs and contributes nearly \$100 billion annually to the U.S. economy. Many of those jobs are on the Mississippi River and its tributaries, where the efficiencies of waterborne transportation are especially pronounced. The tug and barge industry transports more than 750 million tons of cargo each year, including foundational "building blocks" of our economy, like food/farm products, fuels, coal and raw materials for manufacturing.

Inland marine transportation is the most environmentally friendly and safest mode when compared to other modes, important considerations for those cities located along the Mississippi. A single 15 barge tow can move the same amount of dry cargo as 216 rail cars or more than 1,000 trucks. As a result, grain exporters most frequently choose waterborne transportation routes, with 60% of grain exports being transported on inland vessels on the Mississippi River.

Finally, the Jones Act plays a key role in national and homeland security, one reason why U.S. Department of Defense officials strongly endorse it. The Jones Act fleet provides logistical support for our military while providing a foundation for a robust defense industrial base. The men and women who crew American vessels serve as the "eyes and ears" of our waterborne transportation system, working closely with the U.S. Coast Guard, Customs and Border Protection, and other federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies.

The Mississippi River system has been and continues to be a great American success story and is indeed "America's past and future." The domestic maritime industry, sustained by the Jones Act, is indispensable to making it so.

Sincerely,

Thomas A. Allegretti  
Chairman, American Maritime Partnership

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