



U.S. Department  
of Transportation

**Maritime  
Administration**

# Compilation of Maritime Laws

[As amended through the First Session of the 109th Congress]



**January, 2008**



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# COMPILATION OF MARITIME LAWS

**[As amended through the first session of the 110th Congress – plus  
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## MERCHANT MARINE GENERAL

### CHAPTER 501—POLICY, STUDIES, AND REPORTS.

#### **46 U.S.C. 50101 (2007). Objectives and policy.**

**(a) Objectives.** It is necessary for the national defense and the development of the domestic and foreign commerce of the United States that the United States have a merchant marine--

(1) sufficient to carry the waterborne domestic commerce and a substantial part of the waterborne export and import foreign commerce of the United States and to provide shipping service essential for maintaining the flow of the waterborne domestic and foreign commerce at all times;

(2) capable of serving as a naval and military auxiliary in time of war or national emergency;

(3) owned and operated as vessels of the United States by citizens of the United States;

(4) composed of the best-equipped, safest, and most suitable types of vessels and manned with a trained and efficient citizen personnel; and

(5) supplemented by efficient facilities for building and repairing vessels.

**(b) Policy.** It is the policy of the United States to encourage and aid the development and maintenance of a merchant marine satisfying the objectives described in subsection (a).

#### **46 U.S.C. 50102 (2007). Survey of merchant marine.**

**(a) In general.** The Secretary of Transportation shall survey the merchant marine of the United States to determine whether replacements and additions are required to carry out the objectives and policy of section 50101 of this title. The Secretary shall study, perfect, and adopt a long-range program for replacements and additions that will result, as soon as practicable, in--

(1) an adequate and well-balanced merchant fleet, including vessels of all types, that will provide shipping service essential for maintaining the flow of foreign commerce by vessels designed to be readily and quickly convertible into transport and supply vessels in a time of national emergency;

(2) ownership and operation of the fleet by citizens of the United States insofar as practicable;

(3) vessels designed to afford the best and most complete protection for passengers and crew against fire and all marine perils; and

(4) an efficient capacity for building and repairing vessels in the United States with an adequate number of skilled personnel to provide an adequate mobilization base.

**(b) Cooperation with Secretary of Navy.** In carrying out subsection (a)(1), the Secretary of Transportation shall cooperate closely with the Secretary of the Navy as to national defense requirements.

**46 U.S.C. 50103 (2007). Determinations of essential services.**

**(a) Essential services, routes, and lines.**

(1) In general. The Secretary of Transportation shall investigate, determine, and keep current records of the ocean services, routes, and lines from ports in the United States, or in the territories and possessions of the United States, to foreign markets, which the Secretary determines to be essential for the promotion, development, expansion, and maintenance of the foreign commerce of the United States. In making such a determination, the Secretary shall consider and give due weight to--

(A) the cost of maintaining each line;

(B) the probability that a line cannot be maintained except at a heavy loss disproportionate to the benefit to foreign trade;

(C) the number of voyages and types of vessels that should be employed in a line;

(D) the intangible benefit of maintaining a line to the foreign commerce of the United States, the national defense, and other national requirements; and

(E) any other facts and conditions a prudent business person would consider when dealing with the person's own business.

(2) Saint Lawrence Seaway. For purposes of paragraph (1), the Secretary shall establish services, routes, and lines that reflect the seasonal closing of the Saint Lawrence Seaway and provide for alternate routing of vessels through a different range of ports during that closing to maintain continuity of service on a year-round basis.

**(b) Bulk cargo carrying services.** The Secretary shall investigate, determine, and keep current records of the bulk cargo carrying services that should be provided by vessels of the United States (whether or not operating on particular services, routes, or lines) for the promotion, development, expansion, and maintenance of the foreign commerce of the United States and the national defense or other national requirements.

**(c) Types of vessels.** The Secretary shall investigate, determine, and keep current records of the type, size, speed, method of propulsion, and

other requirements of the vessels, including express-liner or super-liner vessels, that should be employed in--

(1) the services, routes, or lines described in subsection (a), and the frequency and regularity of the voyages of the vessels, with a view to furnishing adequate, regular, certain, and permanent service; and

(2) the bulk cargo carrying services described in subsection (b).

**46 U.S.C. 50104 (2007). Studies of general maritime problems.** The Secretary of Transportation shall study all maritime problems arising in carrying out the policy in section 50101 of this title.

**46 U.S.C. 50105 (2007). Studies and cooperation relating to the construction of vessels.**

**(a) Relative costs and new designs.** The Secretary of Transportation shall investigate, determine, and keep current records of--

(1) the relative cost of construction of comparable vessels in the United States and in foreign countries; and

(2) new designs, new methods of construction, and new types of equipment for vessels.

**(b) Rules, classifications, and ratings.** The Secretary shall examine the rules under which vessels are constructed abroad and in the United States and the methods of classifying and rating the vessels.

**(c) Collaboration with owners and builders.** The Secretary shall collaborate with vessel owners and shipbuilders in developing plans for the economical construction of vessels and their propelling machinery, of most modern economical types, giving thorough consideration to all well-recognized means of propulsion and taking into account the benefits from standardized production where practicable and desirable.

**(d) Express-liner and super-liner vessels.** The Secretary shall study and cooperate with vessel owners in devising means by which there may be constructed, by or with the aid of the United States Government, express-liner or super-liner vessels comparable to those of other nations, especially with a view to their use in a national emergency, and the use of transoceanic aircraft service in connection with or in lieu of those vessels.

**46 U.S.C. 50106 (2007). Studies on the operation of vessels.**

**(a) Relative costs.** The Secretary of Transportation shall investigate, determine, and keep current records of the relative cost of marine insurance, maintenance, repairs, wages and subsistence of officers and crews, and all other items of expense, in the operation of comparable

vessels under the laws and regulations of the United States and those of the foreign countries whose vessels are substantial competitors of American vessels.

**(b) Shipyards.** The Secretary shall investigate, determine, and keep current records of the number, location, and efficiency of shipyards in the United States.

**(c) Navigation laws.** The Secretary shall examine the navigation laws and regulations of the United States and make such recommendations to Congress as the Secretary considers proper for the amendment, improvement, and revision of those laws and for the development of the merchant marine of the United States.

**46 U.S.C. 50107 (2007). Studies on marine insurance.** The Secretary of Transportation shall--

(1) examine into the subject of marine insurance, the number of companies in the United States, domestic and foreign, engaging in marine insurance, the extent of the insurance on hulls and cargoes placed or written in the United States, and the extent of reinsurance of American maritime risks in foreign companies; and

(2) ascertain what steps may be necessary to develop an ample marine insurance system as an aid in the development of the merchant marine of the United States.

**46 U.S.C. 50108 (2007). Studies on cargo carriage and cargo containers.**

**(a) Studies.** The Secretary of Transportation shall study--

(1) the methods of encouraging the development and implementation of new concepts for the carriage of cargo in the domestic and foreign commerce of the United States; and

(2) the economic and technological aspects of the use of cargo containers as a method of carrying out the policy in section 50101 of this title.

**(b) Restriction.** In carrying out subsection (a) and the policy in section 50101 of this title, the United States Government may not give preference as between carriers based on the length, height, or width of cargo containers or the length, height, or width of cargo container cells. This restriction applies to all existing container vessels and any container vessel to be constructed or rebuilt.