



Federal Maritime Commission
Washington, D.C. 20573

Office of the Commissioner

June 23, 2022

The President
The White House
Washington, District of Columbia 20500

Dear President Biden:

Thank you for your kind invitation to attend the Ocean Shipping Reform Act signing ceremony last Thursday. With your signature you have provided a great tool to the Federal Maritime Commission which will facilitate our ability to assist the American consumer. While every tool is needed as we battle to restore the national supply chain, the impact of this latest modification to the national shipping act is significant.

As a Commissioner, I travel extensively meeting with port directors, marine terminal operators, long shore labor, and other stakeholders at the various ports around the country. I have recently returned from meetings at the ports of Savannah and Charleston. These ports represent the fastest growing ocean borne cargo import/ export regions in the nation. While in Charleston, South Carolina, I was very impressed with the Hugh Leatherman terminal, our nation's most recent and much needed marine cargo terminal.

Development of this terminal began over a decade ago and finally opened in March of 2021. This well thought out three berth facility is projected to handle 2.4 million TEU annually and yet, in spite of vessels being forced to loiter outside of the port of Charleston, the terminal is not being utilized fully due to a labor dispute between the ILA and the South Carolina Ports Authority. The matter is currently before the US National Labor Relations Board and there is no clear indication of when the matter will be resolved.

I am shocked that this much needed terminal is laying fallow during this time of crisis due to an organized labor dispute in a right to work state. Growing up in a union household, I am one who would generally be considered pro-labor. Nevertheless, the thought that a labor dispute would contribute to this nation's current supply chain problem defies logic. Blocking the utilization of this terminal contributes to the delay in the import and export of needed commodities and contributes to the general level of Co2 emissions as ships loiter at sea awaiting an opening at the pier.

It should be obvious to even the most casual of observers that the opening of this terminal is essential. Every asset at our disposal should be utilized in this effort. As we have seen, the excessive backlog of vessels in one major port creates a domino effect in all others across the country. As west coast delays have grown, carriers with goods from Asia have begun to deliver their cargos to east coast ports creating growing strains on capacity there. With every additional vessel queued up at sea waiting for a berth, Americans suffer with empty shelves and higher prices. While opening up the Leatherman terminal will not solve the problem, it will certainly help. As a government we should do all that we can to expedite its opening. I encourage you to examine this situation in South Carolina closely and pursue an aggressive agenda towards its resolution. I submit this matter is as important as that in San Pedro Bay and is worthy of equal energy.

As you are aware, there is no simple solution to our current global supply chain problems. The number of participants in the process are legion and the factors to which they are responsive, dynamic. Still, there are things we can do to facilitate the flow of goods. Opening up additional port capacity is one obvious and essential approach. The Leatherman terminal sequestration is one problem where your office may be able to facilitate a quick and effective resolution.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "LESOLA", is written over a horizontal line.

Louis E. Sola
Commissioner