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PUBLISHED: APRIL 14, 2025

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New Maritime Executive Order Signals Robust Action on Domestic Shipbuilding

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On April 9, 2025, President Donald Trump issued an executive order titled “Restoring America’s Maritime Dominance,” launching a Maritime Action Plan (MAP) to bolster the U.S. maritime industry and workforce. The executive order stops short of imposing new docking fees on Chinese-built vessels but directs the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) to continue its Section 301 investigation into China’s shipbuilding practices. Specifically, the USTR is tasked with gathering additional data to support potential remedies, such as port fees ranging from \$1 million to \$1.5 million per vessel entrance for Chinese operators or fleets using Chinese-built ships and considering tariffs on ship-to-shore cranes and other cargo-handling equipment of Chinese origin. Additionally, the executive order mandates enhanced collection of the Harbor Maintenance Fee at land ports of entry to prevent circumvention via Canada or Mexico, alongside a proposed 10% service fee that may require congressional approval.

The executive order further outlines a comprehensive strategy to rebuild U.S. maritime capabilities, including the development of the MAP within 210 days to strengthen domestic shipbuilding through incentives, a Maritime Security Trust Fund, and Maritime Prosperity Zones. It also calls for legislative proposals within 180 days to expand the U.S.-flagged commercial fleet via enhanced subsidies and partnerships with allied nations’ shipbuilders. To align global trade policies, the USTR, alongside the Commerce and State Departments, is directed to engage treaty allies within 90 days to adopt similar measures against Chinese-built vessels. These initiatives, combined with

potential new tariffs and fees, signal a transformative shift in U.S. maritime policy that could reshape supply chains and trade dynamics.

What this means to you

Clients engaged in maritime trade or reliant on Chinese-built vessels should closely monitor the USTR's forthcoming final determination on Section 301 remedies, as these could significantly impact operational costs. Husch Blackwell is well-positioned to assess exposure to proposed fees and tariffs, review supply chain dependencies, and prepare for potential cost increases as the administration advances its maritime agenda.

Contact us

If you have questions regarding this executive order or how other executive actions could impact your business, please contact Julie Maurer, Joseph Baratta, or your Husch Blackwell attorney.