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# Newsroom: Gutoff, Nixon on Puerto Rico 09-28-2017

Katie Warren

*New England Cable News (NECN)*

Roger Williams University School of Law

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September 28, 2017

## **Newsroom**

# Guttoff, Nixon on Puerto Rico

*Amid mass power outages, food and water shortages, experts say that a 97-year-old maritime law could make recovering from the disaster more difficult.*

**From New England Cable News (NECN):** [“How a WWI-Era Shipping Law Could Be Hurting Puerto Rico’s](#)

[Recovery Efforts](#): Several members of Congress are calling for the act to be suspended so Puerto Rico can afford to rebuild,” by Katie Warren



**September 28, 2017** – On Thursday, the Trump administration announced it would temporarily waive The Jones Act for Puerto Rico at the request of its governor. The White House said the waiver could take effect immediately.

Puerto Rico struggles amid mass power outages and food and water shortages, some politicians and experts say that one 97-year-old maritime law will make recovering from the disaster much more difficult.

The Merchant Marine Act of 1920, also known as the Jones Act, was passed after World War I to protect the U.S. ship-building industry and requires that domestic shipping must be conducted by U.S.-owned, U.S.-made ships staffed by American crews. This has meant that Puerto Rico, an island that relies on imports from the U.S., pays more than twice as much as neighboring islands for American goods, according to a report by former International Monetary Fund economists. [...]

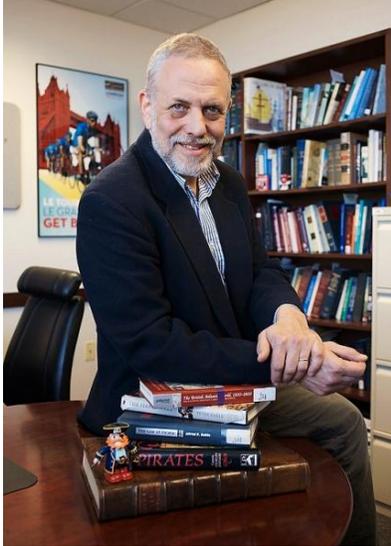
The consequences of leaving the Jones Act in place could be dire for the 3.4 million U.S. citizens in Puerto Rico, some experts warn.

"It means extending the suffering," said [Dennis Nixon, a professor of marine law at \[Roger Williams University School of Law](#) and professor of marine affairs at] the University of Rhode Island. "It's hot there today, there's a risk of thunder showers. They've got no electricity, no drinking water."

Nixon said that it could lead to an even more painful financial crisis for Puerto Ricans, who might start leaving the island in a forced mass migration to the U.S.

He advocates suspending the act.

"It would hugely accelerate the ability to move goods into Puerto Rico, because you'd basically be getting a 20 percent discount on everything," he said.



**Jonathan Gutoff, a maritime law professor at the Roger Williams University School of Law in Bristol, Rhode Island**, said that even though the Jones Act may not be hindering aid from reaching the island, it does increase prices for consumers and makes it harder for businesses to market their exports.

"Given that Puerto Rico is suffering from a fiscal crisis and the aftermath of Maria, anything to help Puerto Ricans should be done and the Jones Act should be suspended," he said.

Whether or not to repeal the act is a tougher question, Gutoff said. Because of the role of the Jones Act in maintaining the American boat building industry for offshore work, more study should be done before a repeal, he said. [...]

*For full story, click [here](#).*