CONGRESS SET TO DISCUSS MARITIME DECARBONIZATION

Date: 13 April 2021

Maritime Alert

By: Brody Garland, Mark Ruge, Darrell L. Conner, Elle Stuart

Lawmakers have scheduled their first oversight hearing on the issue of decarbonization in the maritime industry. The House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee's Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Transportation is slated to meet on Thursday, 15 April, in a hearing titled "Practical Steps Toward a Carbon-Free Maritime Industry: Updates on Fuels, Ports, and Technology."

The hearing is one of the first congressional actions that narrowly focuses on the maritime industry, which is projected to be a busy 117th Congress for climate, sustainability, and decarbonization activity. President Joe Biden and Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg have both cited climate issues among their top priorities and have called for a zero-carbon economy by 2050. Legislation has been introduced in this Congress that attempts to forge a greener maritime industry (see Title IV of CLEAN Future Act). For more in-depth coverage of this bill, our previous alert can be found here.

Outside of Washington, there has been progress related to decarbonization on the global stage. Through its Marine Environmental Protection Committee (MEPC), the International Maritime Organization is expected to approve expansive decarbonization measures for international vessels in June at MEPC 76 that will ratchet down allowable emissions over time and almost surely lead to sweeping changes in the global maritime business. Key upcoming international emission reduction programs include the Energy Efficiency Design Index, the Energy Efficiency Existing Ship Index, and the Carbon Intensity Indicator.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, transportation is the largest greenhouse gas source in the United States. With climate implications being included in the discussion of nearly every significant piece of transportation or energy legislation, this Congress will likely have more to say on the issue. While the maritime industry is not expected to be explicitly targeted by this Administration or Congress, it should not expect to be ignored either. Thursday's hearing is only the first chapter of what will likely be a busy congressional session for maritime policy. Stay tuned for extensive coverage and analysis from the K&L Gates Maritime policy team.

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KEY CONTACTS



BRODY GARLAND
GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS ANALYST

WASHINGTON, DC
+1.202.778.9189
BRODY.GARLAND@KLGATES.COM



DARRELL L. CONNER
GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS COUNSELOR

WASHINGTON, DC
+1.202.661.6220
DARRELL.CONNER@KLGATES.COM



MARK RUGE
PARTNER AND CHAIR OF THE FIRMWIDE PRO BONO COMMITTEE

WASHINGTON, DC
+1.202.661.6231
MARK.RUGE@KLGATES.COM



ELLE STUART
PARTNER

WASHINGTON, DC
+1.202.778.9081
ELLE.STUART@KLGATES.COM

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