

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 3, 2024

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

We write to express our concerns about the impact the strike between the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) and the United States Maritime Association (USMX) will have on Maine and the United States economy. We urge your administration to engage with both parties to ensure good-faith negotiations to reach an agreement that protects American workers and keeps U.S. ports operating.

On October 1, 2024, the contract between ILA and USMX lapsed and was not renewed after disagreements between the two parties. ILA has exercised their right to strike, which has halted operations at ports along the East and Gulf coast. As you know, more than 56 percent of container imports flow through ports on the East and Gulf Coast, including more than 68 percent of all containerized exports, with a daily trade value exceeding \$2.1 billion¹. Each day that a new contract is not agreed to, and the strike continues, could cost the economy as much as \$5 billion a day, creating rippling delays that will result in backlogs that could stretch into the holiday season.

Any lasting strike will create supply chain disruptions and will disproportionately impact small businesses—the foundation of our country's economy. Farmers are in the midst of their fall harvest with plans to sell their crops to overseas markets, retailers are waiting on seasonal supplies and holiday merchandise, and disruptions to manufacturers will have reverberating impacts the longer ports are closed.

Consumers are likely to bear the brunt of this dispute, as businesses shift transportation logistics, price increases will be passed onto customers in important areas of fuel, food, and medicine.

We urge that, as ILA and USMX continue to negotiate, your Administration deploy resources to work with both parties and keep them at the table—negotiating in good-faith—until a new contract is agreed upon.

Additionally, we request that you use the full weight of your administration to lessen economic disruption. We are hopeful that a new contract, which balances the difficult work performed by East and Gulf Coast longshoremen and business operations at U.S. ports, can be agreed upon in a swift and timely manner.

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/09/30/business/economy/port-strike-ila-dockworkers.html>

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Angus S. King, Jr. in blue ink, written over a horizontal line.

Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator

Handwritten signature of Susan M. Collins in blue ink, written over a horizontal line.

Susan M. Collins
United States Senator