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Week 17

Trucking Reform, Jones Act Energy Reform, and the Federal Maritime LNG Carrier Fleet

"American gas. American ships. American workers. American revenue."

1. The Problem

American truckers are squeezed by fuel costs, forced to haul at unprofitable rates set by brokers who hide their margins, and regulated by rules written around outdated technology by people who have never driven a truck. The Jones Act prevents domestic LNG from moving between American ports on American ships — so American cities pay 60-70% more for heating fuel than they would if they could receive Gulf Coast LNG by sea.

2. The Governing Principle

American gas. American ships. American workers. American revenue. The federal government fixes the trucking regulations that treat drivers as the enemy, creates a domestic energy shipping market where American LNG moves on American vessels, and builds a Federal Maritime LNG Carrier fleet that generates revenue while solving the problem.

3. The Specific Policy

Trucking Reform

- **ELD mandate reform — cheat-proof, driver-protective:** Electronic Logging Devices as currently implemented can be manipulated by carriers and do not protect drivers from being pressured to violate hours-of-service rules. Reform: ELD data transmitted directly to FMCSA in real time, unalterable by the carrier. Drivers have independent access to their own logs through a federal app. Violations detected automatically and referred for investigation without requiring a driver to file a complaint against their employer.
- **Hours of service reform — split sleeper berth full flexibility restored:** restore full split sleeper berth flexibility allowing drivers to split the required 10-hour off-duty period in combinations that work for actual driving conditions. The current rule was designed by people who do not drive trucks. The reform reflects how driving actually works — two drivers in a team operation, varying traffic and weather conditions, and the reality that enforced rest at the wrong time is less safe than flexible rest at the right time.
- **Federal Trucking Carrier — the market standard-setter:** a federally operated trucking company that provides market rate transparency on the most competitive corridors. The federal carrier publishes its rates and gives shippers and drivers an honest benchmark. Private carriers that

cannot compete at published rates explain why to their customers. The federal carrier does not need to dominate the market — it needs to make the market honest. Coordinates with Week 16 Federal Market Alternative philosophy.

- **Broker transparency — mandatory rate disclosure:** freight brokers are not required to disclose what they charge shippers versus what they pay carriers. The spread — sometimes 40-60% — is hidden from both parties. Mandatory disclosure of broker margin on every load. Drivers know what the shipper paid. Shippers know what the carrier received. The hidden extraction ends.
- **Truth in Leasing reform — end carrier exploitation of owner-operators:** the Truth in Leasing regulations have not been meaningfully updated since 1994. Carriers currently structure owner-operator leases that transfer nearly all business risk to the driver while extracting most of the economic value. Update the regulations to require: plain-language lease disclosure of all deductions before signing; a minimum guaranteed rate per mile that covers fuel and operating costs; and prompt payment within 7 days of delivery.

Jones Act Energy Reform and Federal Maritime Program

- **Jones Act carve-out for LNG transport between U.S. ports:** the Jones Act requires goods shipped between U.S. ports to be carried on U.S.-built, U.S.-flagged, U.S.-crewed vessels. The U.S. currently has zero Jones Act-compliant LNG tankers — so American LNG cannot legally move between American ports on American ships. New England pays 60-70% more for heating fuel in winter than it would if it could receive domestic LNG from the Gulf Coast by sea. The carve-out allows LNG transport between U.S. ports on qualified foreign-flag vessels as a bridge while the Federal Maritime LNG Carrier fleet is built.
- **Federal Maritime LNG Carrier fleet — 10-20 vessels over 8 years:** government-owned LNG tankers built in American shipyards employing American workers, crewed by American merchant mariners, chartered to energy companies at published market rates. Revenue flows to the U.S. Treasury. The fleet gives the federal government direct control over domestic energy delivery commitments to allies — a foreign policy tool worth more than the charter revenue alone. Build cost: \$200-250 million per vessel. Annual revenue per vessel at market charter rates: \$14 million. 10-vessel fleet: \$140 million per year to deficit reduction. 20-vessel fleet: \$280 million per year.
- **Guantanamo Bay Naval Maintenance Facility services the Atlantic Fleet:** the GTMO facility repurposed as a full-service ship maintenance facility (Week 13) services the Atlantic Fleet LNG carriers. American ships maintained at an American federal facility in the Caribbean. The supply chain is domestic end to end.

4. Estimated Cost

Federal Maritime LNG Carrier fleet at 10 vessels: \$140 million per year to deficit reduction. 20 vessels: \$280 million per year. Build cost offset over the vessel's 25-year operational life. Federal Trucking Carrier: market rate transparency value is structural — reduces shipper costs by an estimated \$2-5 billion per year by establishing honest market pricing. Jones Act LNG carve-out reduces New England energy costs by an estimated \$500 million-1 billion per year.

5. Year 1 Implementation and Measurable Result

Year 1 measurable result: Jones Act LNG carve-out executive order issued within 30 days; ELD real-time FMCSA transmission requirement in effect within 90 days; broker transparency rule effective within 180 days; first Federal Maritime LNG Carrier construction contract awarded within 180 days; Federal Trucking Carrier operational on at least 3 major corridors by end of Year 1.

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