

# JONES ACT IS ESSENTIAL FOR TUG CONSTRUCTION IN THE US

AMERICAN NAVAL ARCHITECTS HAVE DESIGNED ADVANCED TUGS AND US SHIPYARDS ARE PROTECTED BY THE JONES ACT TO PREVENT TUG CONSTRUCTION BEING OUTSOURCED TO LOW-COST PRODUCERS, WRITES HAL HOCKEMA.



**ABOVE:** Hal Hockema: US shipyards need the Jones Act

**TOP RIGHT:** Hockema & Whalen Associates designed 6,800 bhp ASD tug *Gretchen Dunlap*

US-based naval architects have designed advanced tugs, including azimuth stern drive (ASD) vessels, to compete with designers outside of the country. But many US-based tugboat operators prefer less advanced vessels and to build in local shipyards, explained Hal Hockema of US-based naval architect Hockema & Whalen Associates.

In a response to a *Tug Technology & Business* comment, he said: “American naval architects know all about advanced technologies and we can, and do, design all of these into our tugs and other vessels. For example, we designed the 6,800 bhp ASD tug *Gretchen Dunlap*. However, we are also a reflection of our clients’ needs, and so those advanced features sometimes do not get designed into new vessels. Some American owners prefer simpler vessels.”

Mr Hockema continued: “My small naval architecture firm, with 10 employees, is capable of designing best-in-class vessels, for which we offer our services. The US is a good country to operate a small business in, and we have numerous clients who recognise our abilities and the profit that can result from competent long-term mutual relationships.”

But there is competition from European naval architects in the US as this is not covered by protectionist laws in the Jones Act. Mr Hockema explained: “While the Jones Act protects American shipyards and vessel owners, it does not protect American independent naval architects.”

He continued: “Recently, my firm was considered for a new tug design by a US Jones Act operator, but the design work was awarded to Dutch company Damen. It is our opinion that the prospective client did not save money

in doing this. The published contract price for construction of the vessels was actually higher than what we felt could have been done to meet all of the client’s operating needs.”

Mr Hockema said it is critical that the US remains self-sufficient in meeting its maritime requirements by maintaining a comprehensive shipbuilding and ship operations base. “Americans need some protections of our own, albeit with far fewer protections than most other countries in the world,” he said.

He continued: “While military shipbuilding in the US receives substantial assistance from government, commercial shipbuilding receives very little, especially when compared to European and Asian countries. American commercial shipyards would thrive if they received as much assistance from the government, as do say Dutch, Chinese and Norwegian shipyards.”

Thus, he thinks the Jones Act is an essential law to maintain US self-sufficiency. “The Jones Act happens to be one of our comparatively few protectionist laws. We need some protections of our own. Because, if we went down the lowest bidder route, all of our construction, crews and possibly even ownership could eventually go to China.”

This opinion was in response to an editor comment published on [tugtechnologyandbusiness.com](http://tugtechnologyandbusiness.com) in November 2016. The editor comment was also published in the fourth quarter issue of *Tug Technology & Business*. **TTB**

\*Hal Hockema is president and managing principal for engineering at US-based naval architects Hockema & Whalen Associates