

TransDigest

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Upcoming Educational Opportunities!

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FREIGHT CLAIMS IN PLAIN ENGLISH (4TH ED.)

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EDITORIAL

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Last month in the International section of TRANSDIGEST #337 discussing tariffs, we referenced the expression, “May you live in interesting times,” and the fact that it is more of a curse than a blessing.

We are still in “interesting” times, what with the ongoing conflicts in the Middle-East and elsewhere; more and more reports of rampant fraud in healthcare, education and transportation; extreme divisiveness in the body politic; and alleged corruption and scandal in the government.

Below we discuss fraud in the transportation industry, focusing on the Super Ego Holding example, along with various legislation that has been proposed in an attempt to control and eliminate this scourge.

We also discuss below some of the not so obvious impacts of the conflict with Iran. We are finding out that the ramifications go far beyond simply the loss from the world market of a significant supply of energy in the form of crude oil and liquified natural gas (“LNG”). In addition to those, the impacts include such disparate products as aluminum, fertilizer, drugs, and helium. Also, that for some of this production, it could take years for a full recovery.

We live in interesting times, and although there is nothing we can do directly to change the outcome of events on the macro scale, on the micro scale we can attempt to protect and improve our business interests through education and by being proactive. The Transportation & Logistics Council, Inc. continues to offer timely virtual workshops and seminars to help members address these matters.

In the meantime, with all this distraction and disruption, we must carry on with the everyday business of business, as we wait, hopefully, for matters to resolve themselves. All the while, knowing that whether it comes in the form of a natural disaster, political turmoil or something more localized, there will be further turmoil and disruption that we must try to be ready for. As the Grateful Dead sang in “[Uncle John’s Band](#)”:

Well, the first days are the hardest days
Don't you worry anymore
'Cause when life looks like Easy Street
There is danger at your door.

ASSOCIATION NEWS

UPCOMING VIRTUAL SEMINARS

Save the Dates - Live Virtual Summer Seminars – Registration Opening Soon!

Each seminar totals 8 hours and is delivered in 2-hour sessions over four days.

- Transportation, Logistics & the Law – June 2, 4, 9 & 11
- Freight Claims in Plain English – June 16,18, 23 & 25
- Contracting for Transportation & Logistics Services – July 14,16, 21 & 23

Coming Soon - New Live 90-Minute Virtual Workshops!

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

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INTERNATIONAL

TARIFFS UPDATE – REFUND PORTAL OPEN

On Monday, April 20, 2026, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (“CBP”) tariff refund claims portal went live with information and instructions available [here](#). It is estimated that companies paid more than \$166 billion in International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) tariffs that were ruled to be illegal. That outstanding balance is expected to accrue roughly an additional \$650 million in interest each month, or about \$22 million per day.

While the government has lost trade cases in the past — and has been forced to refund money as a result — the repayment process the administration now faces is unlike any in recent history. By the administration’s [own count](#), there were more than 330,000 importers by March that had paid IEEPA duties on more than 53 million entries.

CBP is utilizing the Consolidated Administration and Processing of Entries (“CAPE”) functionality within the Automated Commercial Environment (“ACE”) to streamline the submission and processing of valid refund requests for duties imposed under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (“IEEPA”), as authorized by court order or applicable law. CAPE is designed to consolidate refunds of IEEPA duties including interest rather than processing refunds on an entry-by-entry basis. CBP is implementing CAPE through a phased development approach, adding more functionality in subsequent phases for more complicated scenarios. Phase 1 is limited to certain unliquidated entries and certain entries within 80 days of liquidation.

A major open question is who will get how much? With retailers due big refunds, will they pass them on to customers?

According to an April 10 [analysis by Citi](#), Walmart is due \$10.2 billion, Target is due \$2.2 billion and Nike could get \$1 billion back. Refunds are also expected for Kohl's at \$550 million, Gap at \$400 million, and Macy's at \$320 million, the firm found.

Money magazine reported in an April 22, 2026, [article](#) that it contacted 19 companies to ask whether they plan to issue rebates or credits to consumers. The response:

For now, the only big firms that have released statements confirming tariff refunds for customers are in the shipping and logistics industry: FedEx, UPS and DHL. Some customers paid duties on shipments for which those shippers acted as the importers of record. The three companies say that money will be given back when and if they receive it.

Most other brands are staying silent as the refund process unfolds, reinforcing the expectation that tariff refunds will largely stay in the hands of the companies that receive them.

The refunds could present a legal vulnerability for the companies claiming them because many companies passed through their cost increases, raising the overall level of consumer prices.

A January [analysis](#) from Harvard Business School's Pricing Lab found that retail tariff pass-through contributed "about 0.76 percentage points to the all-items Consumer Price Index by October 2025."

This is not sitting well with some consumers and numerous class action suits* have been initiated on the basis that companies unjustly enriched themselves by collecting tariff-related charges that have since been invalidated, and have failed to return those funds to the consumers who bore the actual economic burden of the now-invalidated IEEPA tariffs.

MOTOR

ATRI RESEARCH PRIORITIES

On April 16, 2026, the American Transportation Research Institute ("ATRI") announced its 2026 top research priorities as identified by ATRI's Research Advisory Committee ("RAC"). From the [press release](#):

ATRI's RAC selected a diverse set of research priorities designed to address some of the industry's most critical issues focused on improving safety, enhancing driver health and wellness, and understanding how major weather events impact trucking operations. The 2026 ATRI top research priorities are:

* Following is a partial list of class-action suits that have been filed: *Reiser v. Fed. Express Corp.*, No. 1:26-cv-21328 (S.D. Fla. Feb. 27, 2026); *Ward v. EssilorLuxottica S.A.*, No. 1:26-cv-01133 (E.D.N.Y. Feb. 26, 2026); *Anastopoulo v. FedEx Corp.*, No. 2:26-cv-00753 (D.S.C. Feb. 20, 2026); *Anastopoulo v. FedEx Corp.*, No. 2:26-cv-02181 (W.D. Tenn. Feb. 20, 2026); *Anastopoulo v. United Parcel Serv. Inc.*, No. 1:26-cv-01005 (N.D. Ga. Feb. 20, 2026); *Anastopoulo v. United Parcel Serv. Inc.*, No. 2:26-cv-00754 (D.S.C. Feb. 20, 2026); *Russell v. Whaleco Inc.*, No. 2026CH02456 (Ill. Cir. Ct. Cook Cnty. filed Mar. 13, 2026); *Ward v. EssilorLuxottica S.A.*, No. 26-cv-1133 (E.D.N.Y. filed Feb. 26, 2026); *Stockov v. Costco Wholesale Corp.*, No. 1:26-cv-02734 (N.D. Ill. filed Mar. 11, 2026); *Gower v. Costco Wholesale Corp.*, No. 26-2-08898-5 SEA (Wash. Super. Ct. King Cnty. filed Mar. 16, 2026).

Outcomes of Coaching Practices and Front-Line Management on Safety. The trucking industry has increasingly adopted a proactive approach to safety that relies on coaching and front-line management. Through a series of data collection efforts and statistical analyses, this research will identify industry best practices for driver coaching that have the greatest impact on safety outcomes.

Advancing “Beyond Compliance.” Over 15 years ago, ATRI published the first research examining potential benefits of an “Alternative Compliance” program – a concept that would motivate and reward motor carriers for voluntary investments in safety technologies, strategies, and programs that have proven safety benefits. Now referred to as “Beyond Compliance,” that same concept continues to generate interest by industry and government. This research will examine potential incentives for participation in a Beyond Compliance program and develop a pilot test methodology and evaluation plan.

State Benchmarking: Identifying the Best Business Climate States for Trucking. There currently exists significant variances in the 50 states’ economic, operational and regulatory environments for motor carriers. This research will develop a benchmarking index based on state data relating to each state’s business climate measures including insurance costs and litigation exposure, taxes and fees assessed on truck fleets, labor costs including workers compensation, and operational costs such as fuel prices, tolls and parking availability.

Assessing the Costs and Benefits of Federal and State Regulations by Stakeholder Group. The trucking industry is subject to myriad regulations at the state and federal levels. Many of those regulations present increased costs, decreased productivity, and unclear benefits, while others may provide measurable benefits but are not enforced. This research will develop a template for trucking industry regulatory cost-benefit analyses that index regulations based on how beneficial they are, whether or not they are clearly understood and implemented by the industry, and the degree to which they are enforced.

Quantifying the Relationship Between Medical Card Status & Operational Impacts. The nation’s truck drivers face myriad health and wellness challenges exacerbated by the sedentary nature of truck driving, extended periods away from home, and inconsistent support for exercise and healthy eating. Beyond creating chronic health issues for drivers, these challenges increase the industry’s operational costs including healthcare, workers compensation, reduced driver productivity and increased driver turnover. This research will utilize drivers’ medical card status as a proxy for driver health and quantify the nexus between driver health and increased industry operational costs.

Major Weather Event Impacts on Trucking. Major weather events such as hurricanes, wildfires and snowstorms have a significant impact on roadway operations, particularly when the impacts close major freight routes for an extended period of time. The closures are extremely disruptive and costly for supply chains and in particular, the trucking industry. This research will utilize case studies to identify best practices for truck fleets, state Departments of Transportation and State Trucking Associations for preparing for and responding to major weather events.

ATRI EXTENDS OPERATIONAL COSTS OF TRUCKING PARTICIPATION DEADLINE

On April 24, 2026, the American Transportation Research Institute (“ATRI”) announced an extension for motor carriers to participate in its annual *Operational Costs of Trucking* report. For-hire motor carriers can now submit data through **Friday, May 15, 2026**. According to the press release:

Data for can be submitted online or by PDF: [both forms are available on ATRI's website](#) along with a sample customized report and other helpful information for participants. All confidential data is protected and published only in anonymized averages; NDAs can be signed by request.

ATRI's *Operational Costs of Trucking* is trusted by thousands of industry decisionmakers every year as a key barometer of freight market conditions and is the leading public benchmarking tool for motor carriers of all sectors, from owner-operators to 10,000+ truck fleets. The report tracks cost metrics such as driver pay, equipment expenditures, and insurance premiums as well as key performance indicators such as non-revenue mileage, driver utilization, mileage between breakdowns, and revenue per truck per week.

All participating motor carriers receive a customized report that compares their costs and operations to an anonymized peer group of the same sector and size. New in 2026, customized reports for multi-year participants will also include year-over-year comparisons to more directly evaluate trends over time.

DRIVER CLASSIFICATION

The apparently never-ending saga of worker classification, whether an employee or and independent contractor, has taken a new turn. As noted last month in TRANSDIGEST #337, the Wage and Hour Division (“WHD”) of the U.S. Department of Labor [proposed new rule](#) published on February 27, 2026.

The proposed rule aims to rescind a 2024 final rule and return to an “economic reality” analysis similar to the one used in 2021. This is important for trucking industry where the use of independent contractors is a cornerstone of logistics. The proposed rule (146 pages) includes a lengthy in-depth history of the legislation and litigation regarding this issue. The comment deadline is April 28, 2026.

As of April 23, 2026, almost eleven thousand comments had been received. A completely unscientific random review of several dozen comments showed an overwhelming support of the proposed rule change. That being said, it should be noted that a very large portion of the comments reviewed were from Instacart and DoorDash drivers, where the content of their comments were often identical. There was also evidence of another group who identified themselves as an “independent financial professional, and small business owner”, having members respond with the same or similar comments.

While it will be a while before we get a decision on this new rule, it is important to note that the labor laws that determine whether a worker is an employee or an independent contractor are both state and federal. This results in uncertainty and paralysis for businesses and industries, where there is a patchwork of conflicting state laws across the country, and the federal law can change with changes in administration.

One issue at the core of the debate over worker classification has to do with benefits, such as health insurance, retirement funds, or paid leave. Some states have begun experimenting with a possible solution in the form of using a [portable benefits model](#). Under this framework, independent contractors in the gig economy are given access to SEP IRA–style accounts in which both they and gig companies can contribute. The funds from these accounts follow the contractors from job to job, rather than being tied to a single company, and they can be used to pay for benefits similar to what an employee would have.

States as ideologically diverse as Pennsylvania, Utah, and Maryland have pursued this model in recent years, with [more states](#) set to join the ranks this year. The idea has even made its way to Congress in the [Unlocking Benefits for Independent Workers Act](#) that was introduced last year by Sen. Bill Cassidy (R-La.).

NON-DOMICILED CDLS AND ELP COMPLIANCE

In its effort to enforce English language proficiency (“ELP”) and non-domiciled commercial driver license (“CDL”) rule compliance, the federal government has threatened to withhold federal highway funding from states that fail to cooperate. So far, California and New York are the only two states to actually lose funding.

On April 16, 2026, U.S. Transportation Secretary Sean P. Duffy announced that the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (“FMCSA”) was withholding over \$73 million from the State of New York for failing to revoke illegally issued non-domiciled commercial learner’s permits (“CLPs”) and commercial driver’s licenses (“CDLs”).

According to the [press release](#):

FMCSA’s [audit](#) of New York’s non-domiciled CDL issuance practices found numerous failures by the state of New York including:

- Out of 200 sampled records, 107 were issued in violation of federal law—a failure rate of over 53%.
- The DMV’s systems defaulted to issuing 8-year licenses to foreign drivers for non-REAL ID licenses, regardless of when their legal status expired.

Additional Information:

On December 12, FMCSA found that, following a [nationwide audit of CDLs](#), the New York Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) had been routinely issuing CDLs to foreign drivers illegally. The federal audit exposed a 53% failure rate in the records sampled, indicating a total collapse in the administration of New York’s non-domiciled CDL program.

On March 13, FMCSA issued a formal response refuting the state’s claims of compliance and reiterating that New York had failed to complete required corrective actions, including the immediate rescission of all noncompliant non-domicile CLPs and CDLs.

After the state’s continuous refusal to remove these dangerous drivers from the road, FMCSA has issued a [final determination](#) of substantial noncompliance and moved to withhold \$73,502,543. This represents 4% of New York’s National Highway Performance Program and Surface Transportation Program Block Grant funds.

Previously, according to an [announcement](#) on January 7, 2026, the FMCSA was withholding approximately \$160 million from the State of California for failing to cancel over 17,000 illegally issued CDLs by the agreed-upon deadline of January 5, 2026.

According to an April 2, 2026, *Landline.Media* [article](#), other states have been more proactive in complying with the federal directives: Indiana, Alabama, South Dakota and Utah have passed bills dealing with non-domiciled CDLs or English proficiency. States with pending bills include Arizona, Georgia, Kentucky, Illinois, Iowa, Oklahoma, Tennessee, South Carolina, Wyoming.

Indiana has been particularly proactive, passing [HB 1200](#) in March, 2026, one of the strictest state rules regulating non-domiciled CDLs. New rules in the Hoosier State include:

- Revocation of non-domiciled CDL if driver loses legal status to stay in the U.S.
- Fake documents or invalid foreign CDL is now a felony; \$5,000 fine for drivers, \$50,000 fines for employers
- Businesses knowingly training ineligible drivers face steep penalties

- CDL testing conducted entirely in English
- Codifies English proficiency
- All non-domiciled CDLs issued before March 1, 2026, expire April 1, 2026

The new law requires all non-domiciled CDL holders to hold a H-2A, H-2B or E-2 visa. Those who do not no longer have a valid. According to an Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles spokesperson, nearly all non-domiciled CDLs were revoked on April 1.

At the federal level, there are continuing efforts to codify the new rules and guidance into law. Last month we discussed the Dalilah Law ([S.3917](#)). This legislation would require states to take specific measures to get illegal alien truck drivers off America’s roads to receive federal Department of Transportation funding. It has also been introduced in the House as [H.R.7758](#).

Previously, on October 3, 2025, [H.R. 5688](#) was introduced. Titled the “Non-Domiciled CDL Integrity Act”, it would cement English proficiency into federal law and strengthen non-domiciled requirements. The bill would also ban foreign dispatch services/brokers and crack down on CDL mills. It has 73 cosponsors and is currently in the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure with the last action on 3/18/26.

Other legislation, the “Securing American Freight, Enforcement and Reliability in Transport Act” or “SAFER Transport Act” was introduced in the Senate on February 25, 2026, ([S. 3950](#)) and the House on March 3, 2026, ([H.R. 8267](#)). Pursuant to this comprehensive legislation, a “Freight Fraud and Theft Advisory Committee” would be created to “receive input from the public on ways in which the Department [of Transportation] could contribute to the reduction of freight fraud and theft using existing authorities of the Department”, and submit its findings within two years. The advisory committee shall be composed of the following stakeholders:

- (A) Motor carriers, including owner-operators.
 - (B) Railroads.
 - (C) Ports.
 - (D) Marine terminal operators.
 - (E) Freight brokers.
 - (F) Aviation operators.
 - (G) State and local law enforcement officials.
 - (H) Shippers.
 - (I) Insurance companies.
- (2) Other stakeholders that the Secretary determines would provide insightful information on ways to address freight fraud and theft.

The SAFER Transport Act also has other provisions that would, amongst other things: formalize how the agencies handle information and coordinate on freight fraud cases; change the registration process for carrier, brokers and freight forwarders by phasing out MC numbers and transitioning to U.S. DOT numbers; require states to submit monthly reports on licensing; and establish a process to audit registered training providers.

In addition, the FMCSA has issued some regulatory guidance non-domiciled CDLs and ELD roadside enforcement policy. On March 30, 2026 the FMCSA issued its [Non-Domiciled CDL Final Rule FAQs](#) revising its prior FAQ. On April 16, 2026 the FMCSA issued its [English Language Proficiency Roadside Enforcement Policy FAQs](#) revising its prior FAQ that was rescinded on the same date.

In his April 2026 *Regulatory and Legislative Update*, Hank Seaton describes this ELP update as expanding the number of drivers potentially subject to being placed out of service for failing to establish adequate English language skills.

Since FMCSA issued its initial internal enforcement document last May, the policy has been that drivers operating commercial motor vehicles in the border commercial zones along the U.S.-Mexico border are not to be placed out of service even if they are cited for violating the English language proficiency (ELP) requirement. However, that's where the vast majority of ELP violations occur, so only about 29% of drivers cited for ELP violations have been placed out of service (OOS) since ELP was reinstated as an OOS violation last June.

The April 16 guidance, however, modifies the policy in a way that will expand the pool of drivers by an unknown degree. The new standard is that the exception to OOS "applies to those drivers whose current trip would not involve or has not involved transportation in the U.S. that would take the driver outside of the U.S.-Mexico border commercial zones." Enforcement personnel are directed to determine the scope of the driver's current trip before determining whether the driver is OOS.

UCR FEES TO INCREASE

On April 7, 2026 the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration ("FMCSA") published a notice of proposed rulemaking ("NPRM") in the Federal Register seeking to increase the Unified Carrier Registration ("UCR") Plan fees. These are fees that participating states collect from motor carriers, motor private carriers of property, brokers, freight forwarders, and leasing companies. There was no change in fees for the 2026 registration year, so the fees remained the same as in the 2025 registration year.

According to the [NPRM](#):

This recommended increase averages 20 percent, with varying increases between \$9 and \$9,329 per entity, depending on the applicable fee bracket. Even after the proposed increase, the fees for registration year 2027 are still less than those in effect during registration years 2019 through 2022. FMCSA proposes to adopt the recommended fee increase.

Comments must be received on or before May 7, 2026.

DRUG RECLASSIFICATION

On April 23, 2026, the Trump administration issued an order to change the classification for marijuana from Schedule I to Schedule III. This will bring enormous tax benefits to medical marijuana producers in the 40 states where medical use is legal and may speed research into its effects. According to the [press release](#):

In accordance with President Trump's December 18, 2025, Executive Order on Increasing Medical Marijuana and Cannabidiol Research, the Justice Department and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) today announced the issuance of an [order](#) immediately placing both FDA-approved products containing marijuana and marijuana products regulated by a state medical marijuana license in Schedule III of the Controlled Substances Act, as well as the initiation of an expedited administrative hearing process to consider the broader rescheduling of marijuana from Schedule I to Schedule III. The [new hearing](#), beginning June 29, 2026, will provide a timely and legally compliant pathway to evaluate broader changes to marijuana's status under federal law. Together, these actions provide immediate and long-term clarity to researchers, patients, and providers alike while still maintaining strict federal controls against illicit drug trafficking.

It is important to note that it does not legalize marijuana at the federal level, nor does it change the status of marijuana grown for recreational use. Regardless of its new classification, driving under the influence of marijuana, or any drug or alcohol, remains illegal.

SHIFTING DEMOGRAPHICS - WHERE ARE THEY GOING?

HireAHelper published its [2026 Migration Report](#), an annual analysis of U.S. domestic migration trends, published each year since 2019. Migration trends reflect changes in the economy and American values beyond what is evident in the real estate market.

This analysis is based on [PGM's](#) database of **14,977,223** adult moves tracked for the full year of January 2025 through December 2025. Unlike other studies restricted to lagging census releases or modeled estimates, this exclusive dataset captures real-time relocation activity over the past 12 months. This provides a unique, high-fidelity lens into U.S. migration patterns that is unavailable through public channels.

The Report breaks down how many people moved in 2025, including trends by state, by city, by income, by age, and other factors. From the Report:

Key Takeaways

- **Almost 15 million U.S. adults moved in 2025** according to our data, which accounted for over 4% of the adult population.
- **78.49% of all moves were intrastate**, showing most Americans stayed within their home state.
- **South Carolina led the nation in net migration per capita**, gaining 79.7 residents per 10,000 people.
- **Lower cost of living strongly correlated with positive migration**, especially in the Southeast and Mountain West.
- **Younger generations clustered in D.C.**, while older Americans gravitated toward New England states.

OPERATION SIDESWIPE – NEW CONVICTIONS IN STAGED ACCIDENT FRAUD

Operation Sideswipe is the name given to a long running fraud scheme that involved staged crashes with tractor-trailers to collect money from fraudulent lawsuits. From a recent [press release](#) from the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Louisiana:

According to court documents, the defendants participated in a long-running scheme to defraud insurance companies and commercial trucking companies by staging and litigating fraudulent automobile collisions to collect insurance company payouts. That scheme began approximately in December 2011 and continued until December 2024, and it involved New Orleans area personal injury attorneys (including **MOTTA**, **MOTTA LAW**, **GILES**, and **THE KING FIRM**) paying “slammers” to recruit passengers to participate in purposeful collisions with automobiles, especially 18-wheeler trucks with large commercial insurance policies. The attorneys would then litigate those cases on behalf of the passengers, often encouraging those passengers to seek medically unnecessary neck and back surgeries to incur medical costs and increase the size of future insurance company settlements. Along with slammers, attorneys, and passengers, the scheme also included “spotters,” who drove getaway cars for the slammers, and “recruiters” like **STALBERT**, who facilitated numerous staged collisions by bringing new passengers into the scheme.

The jury also found **MOTTA** and **MOTTA LAW** guilty of obstruction of justice and witness tampering relating to an effort to pay a witness to move to the Bahamas to impede any cooperation with federal authorities. The jury likewise found **GILES** and **THE KING FIRM** guilty of obstruction of justice and witness tampering for secretly recording a charged

individual in October 2020 in an effort to manufacture exculpatory evidence. **STALBERT** was acquitted of conspiracy to commit mail and wire fraud.

“Today’s verdict was the culmination of a lengthy investigation that amassed overwhelming evidence proving the defendants’ roles in a years-long scheme to defraud, as well as their subsequent efforts to obstruct justice and tamper with witnesses,” said First Assistant U.S. Attorney Michael M. Simpson. “**MOTTA, MOTTA LAW, GILES, and THE KING FIRM** successfully launched a fraudulent scheme of epic proportions that both victimized the judicial system, and exploited the auto insurance industry, all to enrich themselves with millions of dollars in ill-gotten gains.” This prosecution, and today’s verdict, makes clear that no one is above the law. I commend the trial team, and our law enforcement partners for their relentless and meticulous work to shine a light on this scourge and hold those involved responsible.”

"The defendants in this case pursued personal fortune through lies and deception, that potentially impacted every auto insurance policy holder in Louisiana," said Special Agent in Charge Jonathan Tapp of the FBI New Orleans Field Office. "The FBI along with our partners at the U.S. Attorney's Office, Louisiana State Police, and the Metropolitan Crime Commission have worked for the last seven years to uncover every instance of fraud, resulting in successful cases against more than fifty individuals. We will continue that pursuit as long as it takes."

Chief U.S. District Judge Wendy B. Vitter will sentence the defendants **MOTTA** and **MOTTA LAW** on July 7, 2026, **GILES** and **THE KING FIRM** on July 14, 2026, and **STALBERT** on July 21, 2026. The maximum penalty for mail fraud, mail and wire fraud conspiracy, and witness tampering is twenty years imprisonment, up to three years of supervised release, and up to a \$250,000 fine or twice the gross gain to any defendant or twice the gross loss to any victim. The maximum penalty for obstruction of justice is ten years imprisonment, up to three years of supervised release, and up to a \$250,000 fine or twice the gross gain to any defendant or twice the gross loss to any victim. The maximum penalty for making false statements to a federal agent is up to five years of imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, and up to three years of supervised release. The Court may also impose restitution. Additionally, each defendant also faces payment of a \$100 mandatory special assessment fee per count of conviction.

Including this jury trial, sixty-three (63) defendants have been charged in the federal probe into the staging of automobile collisions with other vehicles in the New Orleans metropolitan area.

MORE ON CHAMELEON CARRIERS AND FRAUD

In TRANSDIGEST #336 we highlighted recent reports on chameleon carriers and efforts the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (“FMCSA”) was taking to fight fraud. On April 12, 2026, CBS’ “[60 Minutes](#)” aired the [results of its investigation of chameleon carriers](#), with a focus on Super Ego Holding.

According to their investigation, Super Ego Holding is a network of commercial trucking and leasing companies based in Serbia and the U.S. It’s currently under federal investigation and named in a class action lawsuit. Regulators and former employees call it one of the most notorious chameleon schemes — a ticking time bomb on our nation’s roadways.

The [class action lawsuit](#) alleges that:

The lawsuit alleges that Super Ego has a companywide practice of underpaying drivers by skimming off the top of the load price. The complaint alleges Super Ego regularly lied to truckers about the price of the load by secretly altering the brokers’ rate confirmation sheets to make the

load price appear lower than it actually was. Super Ego then paid truckers a percentage of the lower, secretly altered price, and pocketed the difference.

The lawsuit also claims that Super Ego misclassified truckers as independent contractors, made illegal deductions from their pay, withheld their pay, and even paid them less than the federal minimum wage during some pay periods. Plaintiffs seek damages for fraud, breach of contract, violations of the federal Truth in Leasing Act and Fair Labor Standards Act, and violations of the Illinois Wage Payment and Collection Act.

The initial complaint was filed on August 5, 2022 in the United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois and the litigation is ongoing.

According to an April 20, 2026 *Landline.Media* [article](#) on Super Ego Holding, Super Ego responded to the 60 Minutes report, insisting that it is an equipment leasing company, not a motor carrier.

“Super Ego leases equipment to more than 1,200 licensed carrier companies,” Super Ego said in a statement. “Those carriers employ their own drivers and dispatchers and maintain full authority over them. Super Ego does not hire, pay, supervise or contract drivers or dispatchers who are not employees or independent contractors. When a carrier’s driver arrives at a Super Ego facility to pick up a truck bearing the Super Ego name or causes dangerous conditions on the road, that driver works for the carrier and not for Super Ego.”

The article goes on, however, to describe in detail how Super Ego’s operations allegedly defrauded truck drivers from orientation to the day they terminated their employment.

OUT OF BUSINESS

According to an April 24, 2026, [article](#) in FreightWaves a dozen small trucking and logistics companies across the U.S. have filed for bankruptcy protection in mid to late-April, highlighting continued financial pressure on carriers and brokers navigating choppy freight demand, tight margins and elevated operating costs, such as rising insurance premiums, fuel and maintenance costs.

Company breakdown

Company	Location	Fleet size (trucks/drivers)	Chapter	Business type
Bound Logistics LLC	Union, New Jersey	57 trucks / 57 drivers	Chapter 11	Carrier
Stron Logistics Inc.	Pingree Grove, Illinois	9 trucks / 10 drivers	Chapter 7	Carrier
Allbound Carrier Inc.	Bolingbrook, Illinois	9 trucks/ 9 drivers	Chapter 11	Carrier
Allstar Trailer Sales LLC	Stone Mountain, Georgia	2 trucks / 2 drivers	Chapter 7	Carrier/dealer
D.A.R. Carrier Inc.	Oak Lawn, Illinois	1 truck/ 1 driver	Chapter 11	Carrier
Freight Sherpas Inc.	Chicago, Illinois	2 trucks/ 2 drivers	Chapter 11 (Subchapter V)	Logistics/broker
Honey Bee Freight Group LLC	Norcross, Georgia	N/A	Chapter 7	Logistics

Company	Location	Fleet size (trucks/drivers)	Chapter	Business type
K&L Trucking LLC	Temple Hills, Maryland	1 truck/ 1 driver	Chapter 7	Carrier
MLG Freight LLC	Niles, Illinois	1 truck/ 1 driver	Chapter 7	Carrier
Rivera On-Point Logistics LLC	Chicago, Illinois	1 truck/ 1 driver	Chapter 7	Logistics
Timex Freight Inc.	Waukegan, Illinois	1 truck/ 1 driver	Chapter 7	Carrier
ZD Sand LLC	Voca, Texas	6 trucks/ 2 drivers	Chapter 11	Trucking/industrial

OCEAN

JONES ACT WAIVER EXTENDED

On April 24, 2026, the Trump Administration announced that its waiver of Jones Act restrictions has been extended 90 days, until mid-August. The existing waiver that had been set to expire May 17, and the extension will continue to allow foreign-flagged vessels to move commodities between American ports through mid-August.

Normally, under the 1920 Jones Act, goods carried by water between domestic ports must be transported on US-flagged, -built and -owned ships. Trump’s exemption temporarily removes those restrictions for coal, crude oil, refined petroleum products, natural gas, natural gas liquids, fertilizer and other energy derivatives.

Not everyone is happy with the waiver or its extension, such as the Offshore Marine Service Association which issued the following [statement](#) on April 23, 2026:

The Offshore Marine Service Association (OMSA) today responded to the White House’s actions to extend the Jones Act waiver by 90 days, warning that the anticipated action would undercut American maritime investment and jobs while failing to deliver the promised cost savings for U.S. consumers.

“The Jones Act is the foundation of the American maritime industry, ensuring that U.S. domestic cargo movement supports American workers, vessels, shipyards, and the industrial base our Navy relies on,” said Aaron Smith, President of OMSA. “Extending this waiver undermines that foundation by signaling that American ships can be sidelined, driving away the long-term investment, possibly permanently.”

The waiver has not lowered fuel or food prices and instead has shifted opportunity to foreign vessel operators at the expense of American workers and national security interests.

On April 24, 2026, the American Waterways Operators issued a similar [statement](#) in opposition to the Jones Act waiver extension:

The American Waterways Operators, the national trade association of the American tugboat, towboat and barge industry, today released the following statement on the Trump Administration’s announcement of its decision to extend the broad Jones Act waiver currently in effect for an additional 90 days from the May 17 expiration date:

“This Jones Act waiver extension throws open America’s maritime borders to foreign vessels and crews and puts American workers last. It is incongruous with the goal of restoring American maritime dominance and ignores the targeted, case-by-case waiver process provided by current law when genuine transportation needs cannot be met by American vessels. This broad Jones Act waiver is a gut punch to American workers and should be terminated immediately.”

The waiver is one of a number of steps the Trump administration has taken to try to control energy prices as the Iran war chokes oil supplies and boosts domestic energy costs.

MIDDLE EAST UPDATE – WHAT THE DISRUPTION REALLY MEANS

The major news is that it is virtually impossible to predict how widespread and how long the conflict with Iran will impact global trade and economies. It is becoming apparent that the impacts of the traffic restrictions in the Persian Gulf and Strait of Hormuz go far beyond energy in the form of crude oil and liquified natural gas (“LNG”), and also affect numerous other not so obvious, such as aluminum, drugs, fertilizer and helium.

Merely opening up traffic through the Strait of Hormuz will not result in a rapid return to normal because critical infrastructure has been damaged, and repairing or replacing some of that equipment could take years.

A March 31, 2026, [article](#) by Veron Wickramasinghe provides the following explanation of why the it could take half a decade for Qatar’s Ras Laffan Industrial City to fully recover, due to the time it will take to replace the critical Air Separation Units (“ASU”):

An Air Separation Unit is a cryogenic plant that takes ambient air, cools it to minus 190 degrees Celsius, and separates it into its component gases: nitrogen, oxygen, and argon. The process exploits the fact that nitrogen and oxygen have different boiling points. Cool the air enough, and you can distil it like whisky. Except the column is 60 metres tall, the cold box weighs 470 tonnes, and the tolerances are measured in single-digit Kelvin.

Why does this matter for LNG? Because every liquefaction train at Ras Laffan requires massive quantities of high-purity nitrogen. Nitrogen is injected into the LNG process as a refrigerant component and to control the heating value of the final product. Without nitrogen, the train cannot produce specification-grade LNG. The ASU is the lung of every LNG facility. Cut the oxygen supply to a human body and the organs shut down. Cut the nitrogen supply to an LNG train and the entire downstream chain goes dead.

For Gas-to-Liquids plants, the dependency is even more severe. Shell’s Pearl GTL facility at Ras Laffan, the world’s largest GTL plant, does not just need nitrogen. It needs pure oxygen. Thirty thousand tonnes per day of it. Methane and pure oxygen are combined at 1,300 degrees Celsius in autothermal reformers to produce synthesis gas. Without oxygen, no syngas forms. Without syngas, the 24 Fischer-Tropsch reactors sit cold. Without Fischer-Tropsch, no diesel, no naphtha, no kerosene, no base oils. The entire \$19 billion facility becomes an industrial monument.

Pearl GTL consumes 1.6 billion cubic feet per day of North Field gas and produces 140,000 barrels per day of GTL products plus 120,000 barrels of oil equivalent in NGLs and ethane. Its eight Air Separation Units are the single most critical upstream system in the entire complex.

While at the time of writing the author was not certain of the extent of damage to these units, they are very complex and very sensitive. The author goes on to describe how there are only five companies in the world that can manufacture these ASUs and that the lead time for manufacturing a single mega-scale ASU, from contract signing to operational commissioning, is three to four years. In addition, “the heart of every

cryogenic ASU is a brazed aluminum plate-fin heat exchanger, known as a BAHX. These exchangers operate with temperature differentials of one to two Kelvin and require precision brazing in vacuum furnaces. The furnaces themselves are enormously expensive capital equipment that exists in extremely limited quantity worldwide. Only five companies are qualified to manufacture BAHX units.”

There are other critical components with their own supply chain limitations, with the result that it would be at least 2029 before one of these damaged units could be replaced.

In an April 9, 2026, [article](#), Vernon Wichramasinghe discusses the production of helium, a byproduct of LNG production. When Qatar’s Ras Laffan facility shut down its three helium plants, it took roughly one-third of the total global helium supply offline because the “helium plants cannot operate independently of the LNG facility because helium is extracted from the natural gas stream during cryogenic liquefaction. When the gas stops flowing, the helium stops flowing.”

Why is this important? Helium is critical for several scientific and industrial endeavors. As a cryogenic liquid, it cools superconducting magnets in spectrometers, cryostats, and imaging devices. Deep-sea divers use it in breathing mixtures because it doesn’t dissolve easily into blood. And Qatar is home to one of only two plants that produce semiconductor-grade helium, which is ionized and used to etch silicon wafers.

This high-grade Helium performs a critical role in semiconductor fabrication by cooling silicon wafers during plasma etching. Helium also serves as the industry standard for leak detection essential for maintaining the vacuum integrity of deposition and lithography chambers. Additionally, helium is used as a carrier and dilution gas in chemical vapor deposition and atomic layer deposition processes.

The bottom line: helium is genuinely critical for specific, high-value fabrication steps, particularly plasma etching, where no substitute exists. It is not equally irreplaceable across all semiconductor applications. But the applications where it is irreplaceable happen to be the ones that define whether a chip gets made or does not.

Semiconductors now consume roughly 21 to 25 percent of global helium, up from 6 percent in 2015.

Another April 9, 2026, [article](#) by the same author discusses another product coming out of the region related to LNG, nitrogen fertilizer.

Every nitrogen fertilizer on earth starts as natural gas. Not oil. Not coal. Gas.

The Haber-Bosch process takes methane, strips the hydrogen from it via steam reforming, and combines that hydrogen with atmospheric nitrogen to create ammonia. Ammonia becomes urea. Urea goes on fields. Fields grow corn, wheat, rice. Those crops feed 8 billion people.

Natural gas is not a minor input. It represents 70 to 90% of the total production cost of nitrogen fertilizer, depending on regional gas prices. The entire global food supply is a downstream product of methane pricing and availability.

The Haber-Bosch process consumes 3 to 5% of total global natural gas production. Roughly 170 billion cubic meters per year. In the United States, 92% of ammonia is produced from natural gas.

This is the chemical reality that sits beneath the headlines. The same molecule that heats your home and powers your data center also runs through the Haber-Bosch reactors that keep the world fed.

The Persian Gulf region produces roughly 49% of global urea exports and 30% of ammonia exports. Nearly half the world's most important fertilizer transits through a 21-mile strait that Iran has effectively shut down.

The conflict with Iran has also impacted the production of aluminum as a result of attacks on the two biggest aluminum smelters in the Middle-East. At the end of March, Emirates Global Aluminum said its roughly 1.5 million metric ton per year Al Taweelah site in Abu Dhabi, in the United Arab Emirates, had [sustained significant damage](#) from Iranian attacks. Aluminum Bahrain said its 1.6 million ton per year plant was [targeted on the same day](#). These facilities make up more than two-thirds of the Gulf region's aluminum production.

Additionally, the supply of chemical feedstocks for generic drugs has been disrupted. According to a March 17, 2026, [article](#) from CNBC:

The connection between a Middle Eastern sea chokepoint and a U.S. pharmacy counter is less obvious than it might seem — and more direct than most consumers realize. The U.S. gets nearly half of its generic prescriptions from India — roughly 47 percent by volume, according to Rohit Tripathi, vice president of industry strategy for manufacturing at RELEX Solutions, a Helsinki-based supply chain planning software company with expertise in pharmaceuticals. India, in turn, depends on the Strait of Hormuz for around 40 percent of its crude oil imports. “That oil ultimately feeds into the petrochemical inputs used throughout pharmaceutical manufacturing. So even though American consumers are not buying medicines directly from the Gulf, they are still at the end of a supply chain that runs through it,” Tripathi said.

This is just a sampling of the widespread impacts resulting from the halt of trade through the Strait of Hormuz. Some may resolve quickly once the Strait reopens, others may take years.

PANAMA CANAL UPDATE

There has been an unprecedented surge in the detention of Panama-flagged vessels at Chinese ports, with nearly 70 ships held since early March 2026 as of April 2. This aggressive spike in inspections is viewed as a retaliatory move by Beijing following a Panamanian Supreme Court ruling that invalidated port concessions at the Balboa and Cristobal terminals held by the Hong Kong-based conglomerate CK Hutchison.

On March 26, 2026, the Federal Maritime Commission (“FMC”) posted the following:

The Federal Maritime Commission is closely monitoring how recent developments surrounding the Panama Canal terminals and China’s retaliatory actions against Panama are affecting global shipping conditions. Laws administered by the Commission empower it to investigate whether regulations or practices of foreign governments result in conditions unfavorable to shipping in the foreign trade of the United States.

On January 30, 2026, Panama’s Supreme Court invalidated the legal framework supporting Hong Kong-based CK Hutchison’s concession to operate the Balboa and Cristóbal terminals on the Pacific and Atlantic sides of the Panama Canal. The decision followed an audit that uncovered alleged irregularities and raised questions about the concession’s legal basis. Following the ruling, the Panamanian government appointed U.S. subsidiaries Maersk APM Terminals and Mediterranean Shipping Company’s (MSC) Terminal Investment Limited as interim operators under 18-month agreements. CK Hutchison has rejected the ruling, initiated legal proceedings against the Panamanian government, and has steadily escalated its arbitration campaign – including new actions filed as recently as March 24, which seek more than \$2 billion in damages.

In a parallel response, the Chinese Ministry of Transport summoned Maersk and MSC to Beijing for high-level discussions. Chinese government-owned carrier COSCO subsequently suspended its services at Balboa and rerouted operations.

China has now imposed a surge in detentions of Panama-flagged vessels in Chinese ports under the guise of port state control, far exceeding historical norms. These intensified inspections were carried out under informal directives and appear intended to punish Panama after the transfer of Hutchison's port assets. Given that Panama-flagged ships carry a meaningful share of U.S. containerized trade, these actions could result in significant commercial and strategic consequences to U.S. shipping.

The FMC is charged with ensuring an efficient, competitive, and economical transportation system for the benefit of the United States. Actions by foreign governments that detain, delay, or otherwise impede the movement of vessels documented under U.S. law- or vessels of other nations engaged in commerce with the United States- are inconsistent with the Commission's mandate to protect the reliability and integrity of America's global supply chain.

On April 9, 2026, TRADLIX posted an [article](#) on this matter that included some "Operational Implications for Shippers and Forwarders":

- Know the flag of vessels on your active bookings. If you are shipping on a Panama-flagged vessel through a Chinese port, monitor for schedule changes and potential delays.
- Check carrier advisories for routing changes. COSCO has already rerouted away from Balboa. Other carriers may make adjustments. Check with your carrier or forwarder for the latest service status on routes involving the Panama Canal or Chinese ports.
- Review transshipment exposure. If your cargo transships through Balboa, Manzanillo, or Colon, confirm that your routing has not been altered.
- Monitor FMC developments. If the FMC escalates from monitoring to a formal investigation, it could lead to regulatory action that affects carrier behavior on U.S. trades. This is not imminent, but it is worth watching.
- Be aware of the broader context. This dispute intersects with the CK Hutchison/BlackRock/MSK port deal, U.S.-China relations, and the Panama Canal's strategic importance. The situation could escalate or de-escalate depending on diplomatic and legal developments that are hard to predict.

PARCEL EXPRESS

USPS

On April 9, 2026, the United States Postal Service (“USPS”) filed notice with the Postal Regulatory Commission (“PRC”) of mailing service price changes to take effect on July 12, 2026. From the [press release](#):

The new rates include a 4-cent increase in the price of a First-Class Mail Forever stamp from 78 cents to 82 cents.

The proposed adjustments, approved by the governors of the Postal Service, would raise mailing services product prices approximately 4.8 percent. If favorably reviewed by the Commission, the price changes would include:

U.S. Postal Service Recommends New Prices for July

Product	Current prices	Planned prices
Letters (1 ounce)	78 cents	82 cents
Letters (metered 1 ounce)	74 cents	78 cents
Domestic postcards	61 cents	65 cents
International postcards	\$1.70	\$1.75
International letter (1 ounce)	\$1.70	\$1.75

The additional-ounce price for single-piece letters will remain at 29 cents. The Postal Service is also seeking price adjustments for other First-Class Mail products, Periodicals, USPS Marketing Mail, Package Services and selected Special Services products.

In the midst of the severe financial crisis facing the Postal Service and continued rising operational costs, the Postal Service is using all available tools, including available regulatory pricing authority, to ensure we can continue to fulfill our universal service obligation and serve the American public. The Postal Service generally receives no tax dollars for operating expenses and relies on the sale of postage, products and services to fund its operations. Notwithstanding the adjustment, the Postal Service’s mailing prices remain among the most affordable in the world.

The PRC will review the changes before they are scheduled to take effect. The complete Postal Service price filing, with prices for all products, can be found on the commission’s website under the [Daily Listings section](#). The Mailing Services filing is Docket No. R2026-1. The price tables are also available on the Postal Service’s Postal Explorer website at pe.usps.com/PriceChange/Index.

On April 9, 2026, the USPS also informed federal budget officials it will temporarily suspend its employer contributions to Federal Employees Retirement System (“FERS”) annuities, allowing it to keep making payroll, paying suppliers and delivering the mail. According to the USPS [Frequently Asked Questions document](#):

Due to a pending liquidity crisis in which the Postal Service could run out of cash as early as February 2027, the Postal Service Board of Governors has decided to suspend the Postal Service's employer contributions for Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) annuities, effective April 10.

The Postal Service will continue to withhold employees' contributions to FERS and will transmit those amounts to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). Additionally, the Postal Service will continue to transmit the employer automatic and matching contributions and employee contributions to the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP).

There will not be any immediate detrimental impact to our current or future retirees if normal FERS cost payments are temporarily withheld. The risk to the Postal Service and the American public from insufficient liquidity for postal operations dramatically outweighs any longer-term risk to the pension funds from not making the currently due payments. It must be noted that the Postal Service pension systems remain much better funded than other agencies.

FERS employees have three parts to their retirement benefit — the FERS annuity, the Thrift Savings Plan, and Social Security. The Postal Service and employees make contributions to FERS, TSP, and Social Security. The Board is only suspending employer payments to the FERS annuity. All other payments — employee contributions to FERS, and employer and employee contributions to TSP and Social Security — will continue.

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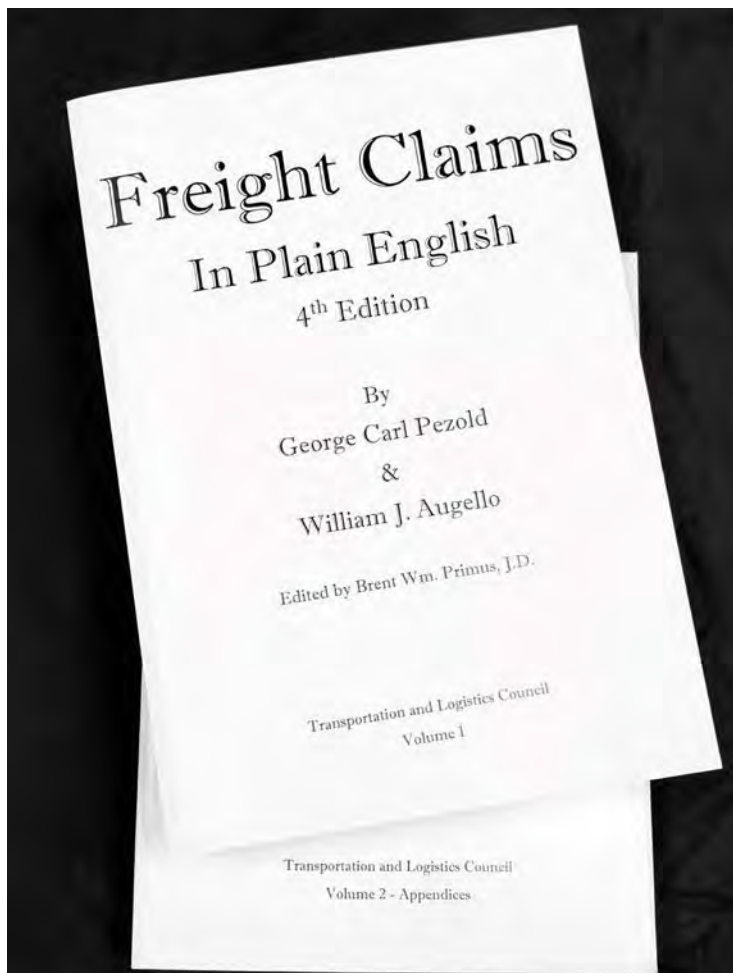
The hard-cover edition of Freight Claims in Plain English (4th Ed.) was out of stock, so the Council has arranged to have it reprinted in a soft-cover edition.

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