

## Trump Administration Proposes Government Reform Plan with Maritime Impacts



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On June 21, 2018, the Office of Management and Budget in the Executive Office of the President issued a government reform plan entitled “[Delivering Government Solutions in the 21st Century](#).” Although the primary headline appearing about this plan is the proposed merger of the Departments of Education and Labor, the plan also has a number of observations and recommendations that will affect the U.S. maritime industry. Congressional action is necessary to accomplish most of the elements of the plan.

The main recommendation affecting the maritime industry is to move the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and its dredging and commercial navigation functions from the U.S. Department of Defense to the U.S. Department of Transportation. The reason for the change is to unify at DOT landside port investments (which DOT currently administers) and waterside port investments (which are administered by the Corps of Engineers). As put by the reform plan—“this consolidation would leverage DOT’s expertise in infrastructure, and make DOT’s maritime responsibilities analogous to its role in other transportation sectors.”

The plan also points out that “shifting these programs to DOT would be an opportunity to reassess the type of Federal involvement in both sectors” and indicates that DOT’s mission would expand to helping states and non-federal partners make investment decisions in the maritime sector. Under the proposal, other aspects of the Corps’ responsibilities for supporting investments in water resources infrastructure, such as flood control and aquatic ecosystem restoration, would be transferred to the Department of the Interior.

In conjunction with the transfer of the Army Corps of Engineers, the plan recommends that the U.S. Coast Guard’s responsibilities for permitting alterations to bridges and aids to coastal navigation also be transferred to DOT “to better align those functions with similar functions already carried out by DOT’s [sic].”

The only other recommendation in the reform plan relating to the Coast Guard is to “eliminate unnecessary duplication between U.S. Customs and Border Protection and U.S. Coast Guard air and maritime programs” which could include “facility consolidation, standardized data, enhanced domain awareness and coordination, and common future capability requirements.”

Finally, the plan observes that DOT/U.S. Maritime Administration “administers two defense-related sealift programs [Maritime Security Program and cargo preference] that are outside of its core missions,” but refrains from offering the logical recommendation to transfer those national defense functions to the U.S. Department of Defense.

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