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## **RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN ADMIRALTY AND MARITIME LAW AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL AND IN THE FIFTH AND ELEVENTH CIRCUITS**

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RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN ADMIRALTY AND MARITIME LAW AT THE  
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I. INTRODUCTION .....	1
II. MISCELLANEOUS DEVELOPMENTS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL .....	3
A. Federal Rules Amendments .....	3
B. Maximum Compensation Rate Under the LHWCA .....	3
C. Increased Penalty Amounts under the LHWCA .....	3
III. THE WORK OF THE SUPREME COURT .....	4
A. Nonmaritime Personal Jurisdiction Decisions .....	4
1. General (All-Purpose) Personal Jurisdiction .....	5
<i>BNSF Railway Co. v. Tyrrell</i>	
2. Specific (Case-Linked) Personal Jurisdiction .....	11
<i>Bristol-Myers Squibb Co. v. Superior Court</i>	
B. Petition for Certiorari .....	17
<i>Touchet v. Estis Well Service, L.L.C.</i>	
IV. SELECTED DECISIONS FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY .....	19
A. Admiralty Jurisdiction in Tort .....	19
1. Problems with the “Maritime Connection” Requirements .....	19
<i>Hargus v. Ferocious &amp; Impetuous, LLC</i>	
2. Problems with the “Location” Requirement .....	20
<i>Rios v. United States</i>	
<i>Mello v. Young Brothers</i>	
B. Admiralty Jurisdiction in Contract Cases .....	23
<i>Interpool, Inc. v. Four Horsemen, Inc</i>	
C. The Rights of Seamen .....	24
1. Seaman Status .....	24
<i>Lewan v. Soo Marine Supply</i>	
2. Maintenance and Cure .....	25
a. Restatement-style summary: Shipowners’ Liability Convention .....	25
b. Thwarted nonlitigiousness aspirations .....	26
<i>Ward v. EHW Constructors</i>	
c. Maximum medical recovery; voluntary refusal of needed medical treatment .....	27
<i>Ward v. EHW Constructors</i>	

d. The intentional concealment defense .....	29
<i>Coastal Villages Pollock, LLC v. Naufahu</i>	
e. The recoupment (restitution) issue .....	29
<i>Block Island Fishing, Inc. v. Rogers</i>	
<i>Williams v. Central Contracting &amp; Marine Inc.</i>	
3. Jones Act and Unseaworthiness Litigation .....	30
a. Causation in Jones Act cases .....	30
<i>Ghaleb v. American Steamship Co.</i>	
b. Prejudgment interest in Jones Act/unseaworthiness actions .....	32
<i>Nevor v. Moneypenny Holdings, LLC</i>	
c. Punitive damages in unseaworthiness actions .....	35
<i>Batterton v. Dutra Group</i>	
<i>Tabingo v. American Triumph LLC</i>	
4. Forum Selection and Arbitration Clauses in Seamen’s Employment Contracts .....	37
<i>Tu Vo v. Trident Seafoods Corp</i>	
<i>Castro v. Tri Marine Fish Company, LLC</i>	
D. Limitation of Liability; General Maritime Tort Law .....	39
<i>Holzhauser v. Golden Gate Bridge Highway &amp; Transportation District</i>	
<i>In re Aramark Sports and Entertainment Services, LLC</i>	
E. Carriage of Goods .....	44
1. Continued Validity of COGSA .....	44
<i>Liberty Woods International, Inc. v. M/V Ocean Quartz</i>	
2. Negligent Third Parties and Himalaya Clauses .....	46
<i>Lofthouse Manufacturing Ltd. v. Ports America Baltimore, Inc.</i>	
3. <i>Forum Non Conveniens</i> and Forum Selection Clauses in Bills of Lading .....	48
<i>Amazon Produce Network, LLC v. NYK Line</i>	
<i>Goal Zero, LLC v. Cargo Freight Services, Ltd.</i>	
<i>Thyssenkrupp Materials NA, Inc. v. M/V Kacey</i>	
<i>Liberty Woods International, Inc. v. M/V Ocean Quartz</i>	
4. Carriers’ Actions Against Cargo Interests .....	50
<i>Mediterranean Shipping Co. v. Best Tire Recycling, Inc.</i>	
<i>BMW of North America LLC v. M/V Courage</i>	

5. Customary Freight Units .....	51
<i>Vinnlustodin HF v. Sea Tank Shipping AS (“The Aqasia”)</i>	
F. General Maritime Tort and Contract Law .....	54
<i>In re Cooper Marine &amp; Timberlands Corp.</i>	
<i>Nieves v. Cooper Marine &amp; Timberlands Corp.</i>	
G. Marine Insurance .....	55
<i>Travelers Property Casualty Co. of America v. Klick</i>	
<i>Sullivan v. Certain Underwriters at Lloyds</i>	
<i>AGCS Marine Insurance Co. v. World Fuel Services, Inc.</i>	
<i>QBE Seguros v. Morales-Vasquez</i>	
<i>National Liability &amp; Fire Insurance Co. v. Rooding</i>	
H. Longshore and Harbor Workers’ Compensation Act (LHWCA) .....	58
1. Tort Cases .....	58
<i>Arbogast v. Georgia-Pacific, LLC</i>	
<i>Cruz v. United States</i>	
<i>Fernandez v. City of New York</i>	
2. Administrative Cases .....	60
<i>Chugach Management Services v. Jetnil</i>	
<i>Fenske v. Service Employers International</i>	
<i>Kealoha II</i>	
<i>Knutson Towing v. Wakely</i>	
<i>Metro Machine Corp. v. Director, OWCP</i>	
<i>Navalo v. Cochise Consultancy, Inc.</i>	
<i>Ansello v. Wisconsin Central, Ltd</i>	
I. Maritime Liens .....	66
<i>ING Bank, N.V. v. M/V Temara</i>	
J. Removal .....	68
<i>Gonzalez v. Red Hook Container Terminal LLC</i>	
<i>Atlantic Coast Marine Group, Inc. v. Willis</i>	
K. Miscellaneous .....	69
<i>New York Shipping Association v. Waterfront Commission</i>	
L. Miscellaneous Nonmaritime Cases .....	70
1. The Government Contractor Doctrine .....	70
<i>Ripley v. Foster Wheeler LLC</i>	

2. The <i>Twiqbal</i> Criteria for the Validity of Federal-Court Complaints .....	71
<i>West Bend Mutual Insurance Co. v. Schumacher</i>	
<i>Ex Parte Austal USA, LLC</i>	
V. THE WORK OF THE COURTS IN THE FIFTH AND ELEVENTH CIRCUITS .....	76
A. Admiralty Jurisdiction .....	76
1. Admiralty Jurisdiction in Tort .....	76
a. The navigable water requirement .....	76
<i>Tundidor v. Miami-Dade County</i>	
<i>Frickey v. Shell Pipeline Co.</i>	
b. The “SRTMA” requirement re shipbuilding torts .....	77
<i>Crace v. Northrop Grummon Ship Systems</i>	
<i>Babineaux v. Diamond B. Industries</i>	
c. The “PDMC” requirement .....	78
<i>Ledesma v. Airbus Helicopters, Inc.</i>	
2. Jurisdiction in Limitation of Liability Proceedings .....	79
<i>In re Texas Petroleum Investment Co.</i>	
3. Admiralty Jurisdiction in Contract Cases .....	80
<i>Larry Doiron, Inc. v. Specialty Rental Tools &amp; Supply, L.L.P.</i>	
<i>In re Crescent Energy Services, LLC</i>	
B. The Federal vs. State Law Consequences of Admiralty Jurisdiction .....	81
<i>Frickey</i>	
<i>Davis v. Dynamic Offshore Resources, L.L.C.</i>	
C. Vessel Status .....	82
<i>Helix Energy Solutions Group, Inc. v. Gold</i>	
D. The Rights of Seamen .....	83
1. Seaman Status .....	83
a. The substantial-in-duration requirement .....	83
<i>Guidry v. ABC Insurance Co.</i>	
<i>Wade v. Baywater Drilling</i>	
b. The substantial-in-nature requirement .....	85
<i>Welch v. Prop Transport &amp; Trading, LLC</i>	
c. Seaman Status Under the FLSA .....	86
<i>Halle v. Galliano Marine Service</i>	

2. Maintenance and Cure .....	88
a. Too much litigation; preemptive declaratory actions; related shenanigans .....	88
<i>Atlantic Sounding Co., Inc. and Weeks Marine, Inc. v. Pervel</i>	
<i>Coastal Drilling Co. v. Creel</i>	
b. The “McCorpenesque” defense: a background essay on <i>McCorpen</i> and <i>Brown</i> .....	91
c. A sampling of current cases treating the “McCorpenesque” defense .....	96
<i>Bosarge v. Cheramie Marine, L.L.C.,</i>	
<i>Cenac Marine Services, LLC v. Clark</i>	
<i>Rinehart v. National Oilwell Varco L.P</i>	
d. Punitive damages in M&C actions .....	97
<i>Satterfield v. Harvey Gulf International Marine,</i>	
e. Availability and amount of daily maintenance payments .....	98
<i>Armstrong v. Offshore Specialty Fabricators</i>	
<i>Moody v. Noble Drilling (U.S.) LLC</i>	
3. Jones Act and Unseaworthiness Litigation .....	99
a. The Primary Duty Doctrine .....	99
<i>DE Jean v. Caillou Island Towing Co.,</i>	
b. Forum Selection Clauses in Seamen’s Employment Contracts .....	99
<i>In re OSG Ship Management, Inc</i>	
<i>Tu Vo v. Trident Seafoods Corp.</i>	
<i>Castro v. Pullmantur, S.A.</i>	
c. Punitive Damages in Jones Act and Unseaworthiness Cases .....	102
<i>Wade v. Clemco Industries Corp.</i>	
d. Other Damages Issues in Seamen’s Cases .....	103
<i>Bell v. Foster Wheeler Energy Corp.</i>	
<i>Rockett v. Belle Chasse Marine Transport, LLC</i>	
<i>Rinehart v. National Oilwell Varco L.P.</i>	
<i>McBride v. Estis Well Service, L.L.C.</i>	
e. Arbitration Clauses and Enforcement in Seamen’s Actions .....	106
<i>Alberts v. Royal Caribbean Cruises, Ltd.</i>	
<i>Cvoro v. Carnival Corp.</i>	
<i>Shah v. Blue Wake Shipping</i>	
<i>Wexler v. Solemates Marine, Ltd.</i>	

E. Carriage of Goods .....	112
1. Negligent Third Parties and Himalaya Clauses .....	112
<i>Royal SMIT Transformers BV v. HC Bea-Luna M/V</i>	
2. The Cargo Claimant’s Prima Facie Case, Delivery, Q Clause .....	114
<i>United States v. Sealift, Inc.</i>	
3. “Restraint of Princes” .....	115
<i>Eitzen Chemical A/S v. Carib Petroleum</i>	
4. Carriers’ Actions Against Cargo Interests .....	115
<i>GIC Services, L.L.C. v. Freightplus USA, Inc.</i>	
5. <i>Forum Non Conveniens</i> and Forum Selection Clauses in Bills of Lading .....	118
<i>Maxima International, S.A. v. Interocean Lines, Inc.</i>	
F. Marine Insurance .....	118
<i>Continental Insurance Co. v. L&amp;L Marine Transportation, Inc.</i>	
G. Collision .....	119
<i>Moench v. Marquette Transportation Co. Gulf-Inland, L.L.C.</i>	
<i>Marquette Transportation Co. v. M/V Century Dream</i>	
<i>Maya Special Maritime Enterprises v. Tug M.L. Crochet</i>	
H. Longshore and Harbor Workers’ Compensation Act (LHWCA) .....	120
1. The Act’s Coverage .....	120
<i>Mays v. Chevron Pipe Line Co.,</i>	
<i>Baker v. Director, Office of Workers’ Compensation Programs</i>	
2. Tort Cases .....	125
<i>Koch v. United States</i>	
<i>Miller v. Navalmar (U.K.) Ltd.</i>	
<i>Dixon v. NYK Reefers Ltd.</i>	
<i>Deperrodil v. Bozovic Marine, Inc.</i>	
3. Administrative Cases .....	129
<i>Bollinger Shipyards, Inc. v. Director, Office of Worker’s Compensation Programs</i>	
<i>Continental Insurance Co. v. Dawson</i>	
<i>Chugach Management Services v. Jetnil,</i>	
<i>Triple Canopy, Inc. v. United States Department of Labor</i>	
<i>Blackmon v. Huntington Ingalls</i>	

I. Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act .....	134
<i>Butler v. Superior Energy Service, Inc.</i>	
<i>Richard v. Anadarko Petroleum Corp.</i>	
<i>Hammer v. PHI, Inc</i>	
J. General Maritime Tort and Contract Law .....	138
<i>International Marine, L.L.C. v. Integrity Fisheries, Inc.</i>	
<i>Abston v. Jungerhaus Maritime Services GMBH &amp; Co.</i>	
<i>LLOG Exploration Co., L.L.C. v. Signet Maritime Corp.</i>	
K. Salvage .....	140
<i>Evans v. Vidalia Dock &amp; Storage Co.</i>	
<i>Salvors, Inc. v. Unidentified Wrecked &amp; Abandoned Vessel</i>	
L. Procedure .....	142
1. Personal Jurisdiction .....	142
<i>O’Berry v. Ensco International, LLC</i>	
2. General Procedural Issues .....	143
<i>In re C.F. Bean LLC</i>	
<i>Lee v. Offshore Logistical and Transport, L.L.C.</i>	
M. Removal .....	144
<i>Zeringue v. Crane Co.</i>	
<i>Savoie v. Pennsylvania General Insurance Co.</i>	
<i>Moreau v. Weston Solutions, Inc.</i>	
N. Oil Pollution Act .....	148
<i>Settoon Towing, L.L.C. v. Marquette Transportation Co., L.L.C.</i>	
O. Forum Selection Clauses in General .....	149
<i>Chang v. Carnival Corp</i>	
P. Miscellaneous Cases .....	150
<i>Edwards v. Continental Casualty Co.</i>	
<i>In re Fairway Methanol LLC</i>	
<i>Heniff Transportation Systems, L.L.C. v. Trimac Transportation Services</i>	



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**I. INTRODUCTION**

This is the seventeenth paper in a series of annual reports on U.S. admiralty and maritime law and practice.<sup>1</sup> In these papers we try to call attention to the principal national-

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<sup>1</sup> The preceding sixteen papers are David W. Robertson & Michael F. Sturley, *Recent Developments in Admiralty and Maritime Law at the National Level and in the Fifth and Eleventh Circuits*, 41 TUL. MAR. L.J. 437 (2017) [hereinafter 2016 *Recent Developments*]; David W. Robertson & Michael F. Sturley, *Recent Developments in Admiralty and Maritime Law at the National Level and in the Fifth and Eleventh Circuits*, 40 TUL. MAR. L.J. 343 (2016) [hereinafter 2015 *Recent Developments*]; David W. Robertson & Michael F. Sturley, *Recent Developments in Admiralty and Maritime Law at the National Level and in the Fifth and Eleventh Circuits*, 39 TUL. MAR. L.J. 471 (2015)

level developments that bear on the work of admiralty judges, lawyers, and scholars, and we look more closely at the relevant work of the U.S. Courts of Appeals for the Fifth and Eleventh Circuits. We do not warrant full coverage, although with respect to the Fifth and Eleventh Circuit Courts of Appeals, we try to be fairly thorough.<sup>2</sup>

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[hereinafter *2014 Recent Developments*]; David W. Robertson & Michael F. Sturley, *Recent Developments in Admiralty and Maritime Law at the National Level and in the Fifth and Eleventh Circuits*, 38 TUL. MAR. L.J. 419 (2014) [hereinafter *2013 Recent Developments*]; David W. Robertson & Michael F. Sturley, *Recent Developments in Admiralty and Maritime Law at the National Level and in the Fifth and Eleventh Circuits*, 37 TUL. MAR. L.J. 401 (2013) [hereinafter *2012 Recent Developments*]; David W. Robertson & Michael F. Sturley, *Recent Developments in Admiralty and Maritime Law at the National Level and in the Fifth and Eleventh Circuits*, 36 TUL. MAR. L.J. 425 (2012) [hereinafter *2011 Recent Developments*]; David W. Robertson & Michael F. Sturley, *Recent Developments in Admiralty and Maritime Law at the National Level and in the Fifth and Eleventh Circuits*, 35 TUL. MAR. L.J. 493 (2011) [hereinafter *2010 Recent Developments*]; David W. Robertson & Michael F. Sturley, *Recent Developments in Admiralty and Maritime Law at the National Level and in the Fifth and Eleventh Circuits*, 34 TUL. MAR. L.J. 443 (2010) [hereinafter *2009 Recent Developments*]; David W. Robertson & Michael F. Sturley, *Recent Developments in Admiralty and Maritime Law at the National Level and in the Fifth and Eleventh Circuits*, 33 TUL. MAR. L.J. 381 (2009) [hereinafter *2008 Recent Developments*]; David W. Robertson & Michael F. Sturley, *Recent Developments in Admiralty and Maritime Law at the National Level and in the Fifth and Eleventh Circuits*, 32 TUL. MAR. L.J. 493 (2008) [hereinafter *2007 Recent Developments*]; David W. Robertson & Michael F. Sturley, *Recent Developments in Admiralty and Maritime Law at the National Level and in the Fifth and Eleventh Circuits*, 31 TUL. MAR. L.J. 463 (2007) [hereinafter *2006 Recent Developments*]; David W. Robertson & Michael F. Sturley, *Recent Developments in Admiralty and Maritime Law at the National Level and in the Fifth and Eleventh Circuits*, 30 TUL. MAR. L.J. 195 (2006) [hereinafter *2005 Recent Developments*]; David W. Robertson & Michael F. Sturley, *Recent Developments in Admiralty and Maritime Law at the National Level and in the Fifth and Eleventh Circuits*, 29 TUL. MAR. L.J. 369 (2005) [hereinafter *2004 Recent Developments*]; David W. Robertson & Michael F. Sturley, *Recent Developments in Admiralty and Maritime Law at the National Level and in the Fifth and Eleventh Circuits*, 16 U.S.F. MAR. L.J. 147 (2004) [hereinafter *2003 Recent Developments*]; David W. Robertson & Michael F. Sturley, *Recent Developments in Admiralty and Maritime Law at the National Level and in the Fifth and Eleventh Circuits*, 27 TUL. MAR. L.J. 495 (2003) [hereinafter *2002 Recent Developments*]; David W. Robertson & Michael F. Sturley, *Recent Developments in Admiralty and Maritime Law at the National Level and in the Fifth and Eleventh Circuits*, 26 TUL. MAR. L.J. 193 (2001) [hereinafter *2001 Recent Developments*].

<sup>2</sup> We make no attempt to be thorough respecting district court decisions, although we have included some for their information value. “A decision by a federal district judge is not binding precedent in either a different judicial district, the same judicial district, or even upon the same judge in a different case.” 18 MOORE’S FEDERAL PRACTICE

## **II. MISCELLANEOUS DEVELOPMENTS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL**

### **A. Federal Rules Amendments**

Amendments to the Federal Rules of Appellate and Civil Procedure will go into effect on December 1, 2017, unless Congress acts on them prior to that date. The affected rules are FRAP 4(a)(4)(B)(iii) (dealing with notices of appeal) and FRCP 4(m) (specifying the time limit for service). Both amendments are highly technical. The FRAP amendment corrects an inadvertent glitch in the 2009 amendments. The FRCP amendment corrects a similar glitch in the 2016 amendment.<sup>3</sup>

### **B. Maximum Compensation Rate Under the LHWCA**

Section 10(f)(1) of the Longshore and Harbor Workers' Compensation Act<sup>4</sup> ties the maximum weekly compensation rate to the national average weekly wage. Effective October 1, 2017, the maximum weekly compensation rate will be \$1,436.48 (up from \$1,406.00 in fiscal 2016).

### **C. Increased Penalty Amounts under the LHWCA**

The Federal Civil Penalties Inflation Adjustment Act Improvements Act of 2015<sup>5</sup> requires agencies to adjust the levels of existing civil monetary penalties annually based on inflation. In October 2016 the penalties were more than doubled for an LHWCA employer's failure to notify the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP) if LHWCA compensation is suspended or terminated within 16 days and for failing to file a notice of injury within 10 days of a lost-time injury. Those same penalties were later marginally increased on January 13, 2017. The penalty for failure to file a notice of final payment or suspension of payment is now \$279, and the maximum penalty for an employer's failure to report a LHWCA-covered injury to the OWCP has increased to \$22,957.<sup>6</sup>

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§ 134.02[1][d], p. 138-24.1 (3d ed. 2007). *See also American Electric Power Co. v. Connecticut*, 564 U.S. 410, 428 (2011) (“[F]ederal district judges, sitting as sole adjudicators, lack authority to render precedential decisions binding other judges, even members of the same court.”).

<sup>3</sup> *See Amendments to Federal Rules: What Practitioners Should Know*, 85 U.S. Law Week 1503 (2017).

<sup>4</sup> 33 U.S.C. § 910(f)(1).

<sup>5</sup> Pub. L. 114-74.

<sup>6</sup> 20 C.F.R. § 702.204; *See also* Industry Notice 160 (January 25, 2017), available at <https://www.dol.gov/owcp/dlhwc/lindustryntices/industryntice160.htm>.

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