

Shipper ‘bill of rights’ takes aim at ocean carrier accountability, transparency

[Laura Robb, Associate Editor](#) | Mar 7, 2025, 11:47 AM EST

Long Beach, California — The National Industrial Transportation League (NITL) has unveiled a proposed “bill of rights” for US shippers that aims to increase industry transparency and ocean carrier accountability.

The so-called Ocean Shipper Bill of Rights (OSBOR) was distributed by the NITL at a meeting Wednesday of the National Shipper Advisory Committee (NSAC) held at the conclusion of the *Journal of Commerce*’s TPM25 conference in Long Beach.

NSAC is the importer-exporter group established by Congress to advise the US Federal Maritime Commission (FMC).

OSBOR, which aims to benefit small and medium-sized shippers, consists of 14 key “rights” for shippers built around elements such as pricing, equipment availability, documentation accuracy, claims resolution, and overall contract compliance by ocean carriers.

The NITL said the document is intended to eliminate ambiguity around pricing structures, delivery times and other shipment details. It would ensure shippers and carriers “benefit from clearer, more equitable practices, fostering better collaboration and efficiency within the industry,” the NITL said in a statement.

The group said OSBOR would help small and medium-sized shippers achieve better bargaining power, “enabling them to compete on more equal footing with larger freight carriers.”

Starting point for dialogue

It’s unclear at the moment whether the NITL will push for legislation in Washington that would mandate OSBOR be included in ocean freight contracts or whether it will simply recommend that shippers try to insert some or all the points in their individual contracts with carriers.

“It’s not too much to ask, but changing the boiler plate in the service contracts [with carriers] is darn near impossible unless you’re [an] uber big shipper,” Rich Roche, senior vice president at Mohawk Global and an NSAC member, said at the NSAC meeting. “That is probably one of the largest hurdles that you would have.”

OSBOR is a starting point for the dialogue with carriers, said Siva Narayanan, director of global logistics at chemicals shipper Syensqo and the NITL’s ocean chair.

“We are willing to be responsible shippers,” Narayanan said. “All we need is carriers that will provide reliable, predictable services.”

NITL said it is currently developing a model ocean carrier contract that could be implemented in conjunction with OSBOR. For now, Narayanan said the document is a starting point for shipper advocacy discussions.

“If you can take five of our points, take five points,” he said. “But if you can take all 14, take all 14. Whatever works for you. It’s a work in progress.”

Contact Laura Robb at laura.robbs@spglobal.com.