

ILA says Clean Port grants a ‘big win’ for union jobs

Federal funding stipulates ‘human-operated’ equipment

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President Joe Biden speaking at the Port of Baltimore, Oct. 29, 2024. (Photo: Port of Baltimore)

While shippers brace for a possible port strike early next year, the largest East Coast longshore union is praising the latest round of federal environmental funding it says protects dockside jobs from automation.

The Environmental Protection Agency earlier this week [awarded \\$3 billion](#) in Clean Ports grants, about half of that for “human-operated and human-maintained equipment” to convert container handling equipment from diesel to electrical power at some of the largest U.S. maritime hubs.

New York-New Jersey, Virginia, Baltimore along with Los Angeles and Oakland are among five locations that will see the largest share, \$1.6 billion, of the money.

The International Longshoremen’s Association said the grants demonstrate the Biden administration’s support for organized labor.

“To advocate on behalf of ILA longshore workers that new zero-emission equipment being introduced at U.S. ports must be ‘human operated and human maintained’ is a big win for the union and its members,” the ILA said in a statement posted to its website.

The announcement of the grants comes [just ahead of the restart](#) in November of contract negotiations between the ILA and port employers represented by the United States Maritime Exchange (USMX).

Earlier this month [a three-day strike](#) by ILA employees shut down container handling at dozens of East and Gulf Coast ports. The work stoppage [threatened to choke off](#) pharmaceuticals, produce, auto parts and other vital imports until White House officials [brokered an extension](#) of the coastwise longshore contract through Jan. 15 while bargaining resumed.