regulations — to protect these companies against unfair competition. However, by then it may be too late for many of those same companies.

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"The full-time hourly front-line employees, who until recently were feted as America's 'hero' essential workers, will be left out of this new golden labor model." ▸

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What started as corporate America's temporary response to pandemic-related restrictions and precautions has taken on a life of its own. Remote work options are now offered in various iterations and are certainly here to stay.

Many high-profile firms, especially tech-related mega-firms, have proudly proclaimed, "We are now fully remote option," while other companies are touting hybrid remote schedules with two or three days at home. That means firms and candidates from smaller demographic areas are now on a level playing field, and regional salary disparities will likely level off.

It's also an excellent job market for global trade professionals, who can now market their skills and experience to firms in other states. They are offered competitive compensation packages and, in some instances, enjoying 20 to 30 percent bumps in salary for remote opportunities hundreds of miles from home. The current remote working phenomenon is occurring on the heels of the "don't-ask-don't-tell-your-compensation" legislation in place for the past two years. This translates to tremendous leverage for smart job seekers.

Remote hybrid business models are working very well for firms with multiple locations around the country within two to three hours' commute by car. Relocations to headquarter offices will still occur, but at a fraction of the frequency just two years ago.

Caveat emptor: Companies should make sure the remote option is built into the employment agreement and look favorably on regional candidates that are a car ride away, rather than a plane ride, for meetings and possible overnights.

And be ready for collateral damage. The full-time hourly front-line employees, who until recently were feted as America's "hero" essential workers, will be left out of this new golden labor model. For truck drivers, warehouse staff, port workers, final-mile delivery labor, and assembly teams, among others on an endless list of supply chain functions, working remotely simply doesn't work.

Since there'll be no remote

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"Strap yourselves in for another year of choppy waters for international traders."

In year two of the COVID-19 pandemic, the economic fallout of the rinse-and-repeat cycle of global shutdowns and subsequent reopenings amid vaccine rollouts and the emergence of the Delta and Omicron variants has reverberated throughout the entire global supply chain, with US importers squeezed between every link in the chain.

If foreign suppliers are still able to manufacture goods for export, the challenge remains actually moving that merchandise from foreign ports to the US in the face of shocking freight cost increases and unprecedented port congestion that few shippers can absorb. Those companies that are somehow managing the international transportation challenge must then contend with the container pileups at US ports of entry and continued trucking and labor shortages challenging inland movement.

The devastation to US companies from the overwhelming cost increases of just the transportation aspect of international trade is being compounded by the continuation, for the most part, of the Trump administration's Section 301 tariffs on Chinese-made goods, higher duties on steel and aluminum sourced from most foreign countries (though recent reprieves were granted to EU countries), and the proliferation of trade enforcement escalations — e.g., "forced labor" detentions, surprise allegations by domestic producers of "evasion" of antidumping and countervailing duty orders, more intensive document requests, more frequent allegations of intellectual property violations, more rigorous enforcement of regulations from other government agencies like the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), Department of Agriculture, etc.

Importers that are the most diligent in their customs compliance processes and procedures are merely having to deal with the inconvenience of these interruptions to the facilitation of their shipments. Those that are careless, negligent, or worse, however, are likely to face more serious consequences, such as cargo seizures and possibly civil or even criminal penalties.

Various bills have already been either introduced or are being drafted in Congress that are either specifically directed at trade with China or more generally designed to further increase enforcement by US Customs and Border Protection. While the US Trade Representative is considering reinstating previous exclusions from the 25 percent tariffs on 549 products imported from China, there is no indication that such relief is being considered for the many thousands of other products still bearing these increased costs.

And while the Biden administration has announced that part of the recently enacted bipartisan infrastructure bill will be used to fund major improvements to ports of entry to relieve supply chain blockages, the effects of such initiatives will not be felt for some time. Strap yourselves in for another year of choppy waters for international traders.