



Statement for the Record

United States House Committees on Transportation and Infrastructure, and
Armed Services

Revitalizing Shipbuilding and the Maritime Industrial Base

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By

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Chairmen Kelly and Ezell, Ranking Members Courtney and Carbajal, and Members of the Subcommittees,

With Honor Action is pleased to submit this statement for the record, and applauds the subcommittees for recognizing this consequential issue of maritime security and for holding today's hearing. We are a bipartisan, nonprofit organization that strives to strengthen democracy and fight polarization in Congress through principled veteran leadership. This includes endorsing legislative solutions to our nation's most pressing threats, connecting Members across the aisle to forge bipartisan bonds, and building coalitions of like-minded organizations to demonstrate overwhelming support for commonsense policies.

With Honor Action works with the 38 members of the For Country Caucus in the House of Representatives, all of whom are military veterans, and have taken the With Honor Pledge to serve with integrity, civility, and courage. These Congressional leaders leverage their military experience and leadership to build support for and pass legislation related to national security, national service, and veterans' affairs. The issue of maritime security and our maritime industrial base is just one area where we have worked on a bipartisan basis to drive support for much-needed legislation.

In the United States, commercial shipbuilding has fallen to an all-time low. In the last 10 years, China built 6,765 commercial ships, Japan built 3,130 commercial ships, South Korea built 2,405 commercial ships, while the U.S. only produced 37 commercial ships.¹ Shipyards across the United States built just five merchant vessels in 2024, compared to just *one* Chinese shipbuilder - the state-owned China State Shipbuilding Corporation - that produced 250 ships in the same year.² That one company has produced more vessels by tonnage than the entire U.S. shipbuilding industry since the end of World War II combined.³

This also isn't a new problem for the United States. The U.S.'s minuscule market share of global shipbuilding predates China's dominance over the market. The last time America was a leader in peacetime global shipbuilding was during the early 1800s, when ships were still made of wood.

¹ "USW Continues to Lead Drive to Rebuild Shipbuilding Industry - United Steelworkers." United Steelworkers, 13 Aug. 2025, [usw.org/news/usw-continues-to-lead-drive-to-rebuild-shipbuilding-industry](https://www.usw.org/news/usw-continues-to-lead-drive-to-rebuild-shipbuilding-industry).

² Matthew P. Funaiole, Brian Hart, Aidan Powers-Riggs, and Joseph S. Bermudez Jr., "China's Shipyard Tiers," Hidden Reach, Center for Strategic and International Studies, accessed April 16, 2026, <https://features.csis.org/hiddenreach/china-shipyard-tiers/>.

³ Ibid.



Shipbuilding exploded during the World War era, but these cargo ships were soon sold to private merchants and replaced by more efficient, foreign-made ships.

The ascension of China’s maritime industry is also not just an economic threat. Their massive shipbuilding industry has contributed to the country’s rapid expansion of its naval fleet. The Chinese have leveraged dual-use technology at their high-capacity shipyards to build their navy into the largest in the world by ship count.⁴ This is direct evidence of the importance of expanding commercial shipbuilding and of leveraging technology, materials, and the workforce to meet U.S. naval force structure requirements.

Aside from the shipyard overmatch - 300 Chinese shipyards compared to 66 U.S. shipyards - the United States also has a significant skilled workforce gap in the shipbuilding industry. At a speech at the Surface Navy Association’s national symposium earlier this year, Navy Secretary John Phelan noted, “Over the next decade, shipbuilders and suppliers will need to hire roughly 250,00 skilled workers to meet demand.”⁵ This presents a real challenge within the shipbuilding industry due to gaps in education to workforce pipelines, high rates of employment churn, and an aging workforce.⁶ All of this presents an urgent need to reinvigorate the U.S. shipbuilding industry not only for commercial purposes, but to support our national security goals and evolving defense capabilities as well. Without being too on the nose with a well-known idiom, a rising tide does indeed lift all boats. Commercial infrastructure and capabilities go hand-in-hand with our future force structure requirements.

This is why With Honor Action strongly supports the revitalization of the maritime industrial base, through critical legislation like the SHIPS for America Act. This bill supports a more robust U.S.-flag fleet that enhances U.S. national security goals and provides an economic hedge in international commerce and trade.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Mallory Shelbourne, "SECNAV: Shipbuilders Need to Hire 250,000underscores the urgent need to reinvigorate the U.S. shipbuilding industry not only for commercial purposes, but also to support our national security goals and evolving defense capabilities0 Workers Over the Next Decade for Golden Fleet," *USNI News*, January 13, 2026, <https://news.usni.org/2026/01/13/secnav-shipbuilders-need-to-hire-250000-workers-over-the-next-decade-for-golden-fleet>.

⁶ Brooke Weddle et al., “Helming a Sea Change: Building the Future Workforce for US Shipbuilding,” McKinsey & Company, January 12, 2026, <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/aerospace-and-defense/our-insights/helming-a-sea-change-building-the-future-workforce-for-us-shipbuildinghand-in-hand>.



The strong bipartisan and bicameral support, with 132 House cosponsors and 14 Senate cosponsors, underscores the importance and urgency of expanding the maritime industry.

Bipartisan members of both the House and Senate have championed the SHIPS Act not for political gain, but because it is the right thing to do for our country. And the coordination of the two subcommittees convening here today is a positive signal to other policymakers and industry that Congress is serious about a comprehensive, thoughtful approach to expanding and supporting this critical sector.

With Honor Action urges your subcommittees, and the larger committees, to work together to ensure sustained funding for shipbuilding workforce development programs, and support measures that incentivize the use of U.S.-built vessels. We thank your subcommittees for holding today's hearing and for your continued focus on this critical piece of U.S. national security policy. By supporting legislation like the SHIPS for America Act and a focus on concrete implementation of the Maritime Action Plan, we are demonstrating that we view maritime capacity not as a relic of the past, but as a strategic asset for the future.