



# CONGRESSIONAL GUIDANCE FOR A NATIONAL MARITIME STRATEGY

Reversing the Decline of America's  
Maritime Power



**Congressman Mike Waltz**  
**Senator Mark Kelly**  
**Senator Marco Rubio**  
**Congressman John Garamendi**

**April 30, 2024**



**The United States is a maritime nation. Our way of life depends on safe, open, and reliable access to the oceans. Our waterways, coasts, and seas provide vast natural resources for American recreation, commerce, transportation, and defense. The seas link us to markets abroad where we buy and sell critical supplies to grow our economy and support good paying American jobs at home. Finally, they played an indispensable role in allowing America to become the world’s most prosperous and powerful nation.**

## **AMERICA’S MARITIME SECTOR IS OF VITAL ECONOMIC AND NATIONAL SECURITY INTEREST**

Decades of neglect by the U.S. government and private industry has weakened our shipbuilding capacity and maritime workforce, contributing to a declining U.S.-flag shipping fleet to bring American goods to market and support the U.S. military during wartime. Moreover, the People’s Liberation Army Navy and the merchant marine and maritime militia of the People’s Republic of China outnumber the U.S. Navy. For decades, our country has failed to invest in critical maritime infrastructure and capabilities. For this reason, the United States is less capable of competing in a worldwide ocean economy worth between \$3 trillion and \$6 trillion dollars, according to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. Meanwhile, our strategic competitor, the People’s Republic of China, became the world’s top shipbuilding and shipping nation, boasting 230 times more shipbuilding capacity than the United States, according to the Office of Naval Intelligence. We cannot continue to allow the People’s Republic of China to increasingly grasp control of freedom of navigation on the high seas, international ocean shipping, and the critical maritime infrastructure necessary to maintain global security and the American way of life.

For this reason, we need a national maritime strategy, outlining and putting into action our plan to reverse the decline of American maritime power and our susceptibility to coercion from strategic competitors on the world’s oceans.

## **ASSURED ACCESS TO THE SEAS IS A NATIONAL SECURITY REQUIREMENT**

Ensuring continued U.S. access to free, open, safe, and sustainable oceans without coercion from global competitors should be the aim of our national maritime strategy. American naval power helps to safeguard access to the world’s oceans, but freedom of the high seas cannot be assured indefinitely without a renewed national effort. The foundation of our access to the oceans lies in robust U.S.-flag shipping, shipbuilding, and maritime workforce capabilities. Therefore, we must develop a maritime strategy with a national focus on rebuilding maritime independence, free from coercion from the People’s Republic of China and emerging threats. This national maritime strategy must reflect that our security and economic way of life relies on open and free waterways. We must act now, before it is too late, and make a once-in-a-generation investment in U.S.-flag shipping, shipbuilding, and the maritime workforce needed to reassert America’s maritime power.

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We must act now, before it is too late, and make a once in a generation investment in the future of America’s maritime power.”

**-Congressman Mike Waltz (R-FL)**

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Revitalizing the American maritime industry will supercharge our economy and strengthen our national security. It won’t be easy, but America has always been a maritime nation—and the stakes are too high for us to fail.”

**-Senator Mark Kelly (D-AZ)**

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The competition between the United States and Communist China will define the 21st century, and nowhere is this conflict more prevalent than in the maritime domain. The U.S. must move quickly to revitalize our maritime industrial base, reinvest in a robust workforce, and advance innovative technologies to project strength and security in the world’s waterways, oceans, and seas.”

**-Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL)**





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Since 2013, I have worked to revitalize the U.S. maritime industry so we can continue to project American sea power abroad during peacetime or war. Congress and the U.S. military must rebuild our domestic commercial shipbuilding and maritime industrial base. American shipyards and mariners are ready, willing, and able to do the job but can no longer be expected to compete against heavily subsidized foreign competitors in mainland China and elsewhere. Our National Maritime Strategy should start with three key words: the Jones Act.”

**-Congressman John Garamendi (D-CA)**



# FACTS AT A GLANCE

U.S.	VS	CHINA
<p><b>&lt;200</b> U.S. Flag Oceangoing Vessels</p>	 Fleet	<p><b>&gt;7,000</b> Chinese Flag Oceangoing Vessels</p>
<p><b>&lt;5</b> Orders (2023)</p>	 Shipbuilding	<p><b>&gt;1,700</b> Orders (2023)</p>
<p><b>&lt;153,000</b> U.S. Workers</p>	 Shipbuilding Workforce	<p><b>&gt;600,000</b> Chinese Workers</p>
<p><b>&lt;12,000</b> Merchant Mariners</p>	 Mariners/ Seafarers	<p><b>&gt;1.7 Million</b> Seafarers</p>



# STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

## ACHIEVE MARITIME PROSPERITY

- ▶ Strengthen America’s maritime workforce and the Jones Act Fleet—the backbone of our sea services, industry, and maritime transportation system.
- ▶ Invest and innovate in domestic shipbuilding and U.S.-flag shipping capabilities and capacity to advance the power and influence of America's maritime industry.
- ▶ Revitalize the U.S.-flagged international fleet through targeted incentive programs and regulatory reforms to make the fleet competitive with international carriers.
- ▶ Drive modern business and manufacturing approaches: innovative maritime logistics, fuels, and advanced nuclear energy, human-machine teaming, additive manufacturing, and other advanced technologies.
- ▶ Survey and evaluate conditions of critical maritime infrastructure to invest in America’s marine highways, guiding public and private investments to the most high-impact projects.
- ▶ Leverage existing, unused authorities to speed the flow of taxpayer resources towards U.S.-flag shipping and domestic commercial shipbuilding.

## ENSURE MARITIME SECURITY

- ▶ Ensure U.S. and allied naval forces can effectively defend global freedom of navigation on the high seas, including against the People’s Republic of China's coercive maritime insurgency in the South China Sea and beyond, as well as emerging asymmetric adversaries such as the Islamic Republic of Iran in the Strait of Hormuz, Iranian-backed Houthis in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, and ongoing piracy in critical chokepoints around the world.
- ▶ Confront rapidly emerging challenges by immediately accelerating polar, seabed warfare, and undersea warfare capabilities.
- ▶ Encourage public outreach to demonstrate how American shipbuilding and U.S.-flag shipping are critical to national security, and that maritime workers are essential.
- ▶ Harden critical maritime infrastructure and networks, enforce the new federal ban on the use of the People’s Republic of China’s Ministry of Transportation’s National Transportation and Logistics Public Information Platform, commonly referred to as “LOGINK,” and incrementally replace Chinese-built cranes in American ports with domestically manufactured ones.
- ▶ Attract private investment into U.S.-flag shipping and domestic shipbuilding while restricting cash flow into the People’s Republic of China’s maritime shipping and shipbuilding industries.





## SEEK ALLIED AND PARTNER COOPERATION

- ▶ Prepare for resource competition in the Indo-Pacific and Polar regions with like-minded allies and partner countries. Review vulnerabilities to international maritime regulation, enforcement systems, and critical maritime infrastructure for global commerce.
- ▶ Support a strong U.S. commercial maritime industry—both domestic and internationally—to leverage global supply chains the United States can access in peacetime, crisis, and war.
- ▶ Establish allied and partner arrangements for combined presence operations to share the burden of providing freedom of navigation on the high seas, conducting maritime security operations, protecting ocean resources in critical regions, and potentially establishing green corridors and maritime opportunity zones.
- ▶ Seek mutually beneficial relationships with treaty allies, exploring comparative advantages to lower cost, time, and the complexity of rebuilding America's domestic shipping and shipbuilding industry.
- ▶ Share the burden for critical maritime parts and projects, applying best practices from other industry supply chain models to the maritime sector.

## PRIORITIZE AMERICAN VALUES, MARITIME INDEPENDENCE, FREEDOM OF THE SEAS, AND THE RESILIENCE OF OUR OCEANS, SEAS, AND INLAND WATERWAYS

- ▶ Promote American values for quality of life, worker safety, freedom of navigation, and environmental stewardship.
- ▶ Create energy innovation incubators that bring military, commercial, and civil stakeholders together to research, test, and deploy advanced nuclear and other alternative propulsion power to improve the range of maritime vessels.
- ▶ Support the study of how rising sea levels and receding polar ice may affect the marine domain to inform how the U.S. should secure our political, economic, and military interests as the People's Republic of China increases its presence in the Polar regions.
- ▶ Advocate to protect fisheries in nations threatened by the illegal and unregulated fishing operations of the People's Republic of China.
- ▶ Create coherent, consistent, and predictable policy in support of reliable, affordable, and stable access to valuable oceanic resources like energy, ensuring a thriving maritime sector domestically, and globally competitive in the international maritime trades.

# 10 THINGS CONGRESS CAN DO NOW

**1** **Speed development of a long-term National Maritime Strategy for incremental implementation, including state and local policy options.** Establish a Presidentially appointed position to synchronize all national maritime affairs and policy. Establish a National Maritime Council, led by the President's maritime appointee, to monitor and report on the implementation of the national maritime strategy.

**3** **Grow domestic shipbuilding capacity and demand modern performance expectations.** Provide the authorities and funding to support domestic shipbuilding. Explore treaty ally collaboration to expand domestic shipbuilding opportunities and insource capabilities to the U.S. market.

**2** **Take all measures possible to expand, develop, and protect the domestic maritime workforce, fully funding and reinvigorating the Maritime Administration, U.S. Coast Guard, Federal Maritime Commission, and other federal agencies that protect, regulate, and support the U.S. maritime industry.** Commission a national marketing campaign, implement workforce accelerators, including through international personnel exchanges, and champion the domestic maritime workforce, the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, and our state maritime academies.

**4** **Grow U.S.-flagged shipping capacity and guarantee U.S. Government cargo during peacetime.** Establish new programs leveraging a range of tools such as tax incentives, enhanced cargo preference, operational subsidization, and federal financing to incentivize companies to ship their products via U.S.-flagged vessels, with the aim of growing the U.S.-flagged international fleet's size and carrying capacity.







**5 Urge investment in America’s Maritime Transportation System and inland waterways.** Address the national maintenance backlog, which according to the American Society of Civil Engineers, amounts to \$125 billion for bridges, \$163 billion for ports, and \$6.8 billion for inland waterways.

**7 Conduct assessments of economic, political, and military factors that threaten U.S. interests in the rapidly changing Polar Regions.** Prepare and plan for potential competition for resources that may result from increased activity by U.S. adversaries in the Polar Regions, while respecting the rule of law and national sovereignty.

**9 Implement rules, policies, and resource decisions to de-risk the U.S. maritime sector from our strategic competitors.** Evaluate and mitigate ways in which the U.S. has dependencies on strategic competitors and prioritize domestic capabilities.

**6 Create innovation incubator programs partnered with industry to lead the world in innovative and advanced nuclear energy solutions for the maritime sector.** Fund modern design and production approaches, automation advances with human teaming, and applied research for materials, fuels, and energy.

**8 Provide the resources necessary to ensure our Naval forces can defend the freedom of the seas. Prioritize forward presence, readiness, and combat logistics.** Provide multi-year authorizations for critical maritime programs and identify dedicated revenue sources to support critical maritime security and naval shipbuilding support programs.

**10 Consistent with the U.S. National Security Strategy, advance the rule of law, allies and partners, trade, quality of life, and universal access to the global commons all unalienable American values.** Express dedication to these fundamental principles by securing extended authorizations and appropriations for vital maritime programs that are crucial to both our economic and national security via maritime strength.

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