

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 8515

To promote and recruit the United States maritime industry workforce, and
for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 22, 2024

Mr. WALTZ introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Armed Services, and in addition to the Committees on Science, Space, and Technology, and Transportation and Infrastructure, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To promote and recruit the United States maritime industry
workforce, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Maritime Advantage
5 Results In National Economic Resiliency and Security
6 Act” or the “MARINERS Act”.

7 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

8 Congress finds the following:

1 (1) Strategic sealift, made up of civilian, Gov-
2 ernment, and commercial vessels and mariners, is a
3 critical capability for executing our country's mari-
4 time defense strategy and wartime and peacetime
5 economy.

6 (2) Ensuring a modern and ready capability
7 will require significant investment, policy
8 prioritization, and the innovation of the American
9 people.

10 (3) The United States Government must take
11 all measures necessary to ensure that sufficient mili-
12 tary, civil, and commercial resources will be available
13 with assured access to meet defense deployment and
14 essential economic activities for our nation in times
15 of crisis, war, or peace.

16 (4) The United States must be prepared to re-
17 spond unilaterally to national security threats and
18 understand and plan for contingencies in which trea-
19 ty allies of the United States must support and aug-
20 ment United States sealift.

21 (5) Maintaining the capacity to conduct sealift
22 is vital to national security and the American way of
23 life.

24 (6) A United States-flag commercial shipping
25 fleet crewed with citizen mariners, competitive in do-

1 mestic and international trade and civil fleets par-
2 ticipating in the United States peacetime economy
3 underwrite American security and survival in times
4 of crisis and war.

5 **SEC. 3. PURPOSE.**

6 The purpose of this Act is to—

7 (1) address the shortage of workers in the mar-
8 itime sector and stimulate growth in the United
9 States merchant marine and shipbuilding industries
10 by providing funding for a comprehensive marketing,
11 recruiting, and public relations campaign. Expand-
12 ing and nurturing a robust maritime workforce en-
13 hances United States national security and strategic
14 sealift readiness; and

15 (2) create a more favorable domestic and global
16 maritime environment for United States-flagged
17 shipping, shipbuilding, maritime logistics, maritime
18 workforce, and naval power, contributing to assured
19 access to the world’s oceans free from coercion from
20 strategic competitors.

21 **SEC. 4. ESTABLISHING NATIONAL OVERSIGHT.**

22 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 2 years after the
23 date of enactment of this Act, the President shall appoint
24 a Special Adviser to the President for coordinating na-

1 tional maritime affairs and policy, including maintaining
2 and updating the National Maritime Strategy.

3 (b) DUTIES.—The Special Adviser appointed under
4 subsection (a) shall serve as the Chairman of a National
5 Maritime Council, that will be responsible to monitor, re-
6 port, and advocate for implementation of the National
7 Maritime Strategy.

8 **SEC. 5. STRATEGY ON DEVELOPMENT OF NAVAL REARM AT**
9 **SEA CAPABILITY.**

10 (a) STRATEGY REQUIRED.—Not later than 180 days
11 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary
12 of Navy shall submit to the congressional defense commit-
13 tees a strategy for delivering a rearm at sea capability to
14 the surface fleet of the United States Navy. Such strategy
15 shall include each of the following:

16 (1) A plan to develop, by not later than three
17 years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the
18 capability to employ transportable rearming mecha-
19 nism equipment to load missile canisters into MK 41
20 vertical launch system cells on Navy destroyers oper-
21 ating, including an identification of the current and
22 planned investments of the Navy in technology de-
23 velopment to achieve such capability, including the
24 anticipated cost and schedule for such investments.

1 (2) A plan for the key milestone events and as-
2 sociated dates in the development of such capability.

3 (3) A plan to coordinate with allies of the
4 United States that use variants of the United States
5 manufactured MK 41 vertical launch system to
6 jointly procure rearm at sea capabilities.

7 (4) An identification of any courses of action
8 the Secretary is considering other than the plans re-
9 ferred to in paragraphs (1) through (2) to address
10 the gap between the rearm at sea capabilities of the
11 United States and the capabilities of other countries,
12 including the use of uncrewed technologies.

13 (5) Such other matters as the Secretary deter-
14 mines appropriate.

15 (b) BRIEFING.— Not later than 90 days after the
16 date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of the
17 Navy shall provide to the congressional defense commit-
18 tees a written briefing on the development of the strategy
19 required under (a).

20 **SEC. 6. VESSELS CONSTRUCTED WITH CONSTRUCTION-DIF-**
21 **FERENTIAL.**

22 (a) IN GENERAL.—Part E of subtitle V of title 46,
23 United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the
24 following:

“CHAPTER 567—USE OF CONSTRUCTION-DIFFERENTIAL VESSELS

“Sec.

“56701. Vessels constructed with construction-differential.

1 **“§ 56701. Vessels constructed with construction-dif-**
2 **ferential**

3 “(a) READY RESERVE FORCE.—The Secretary of
4 Transportation, in consultation with the Secretary of the
5 Navy, shall assign any vessel that is constructed after the
6 date of enactment of this section with a construction-dif-
7 ferential under title V of the Merchant Marine Act, 1936
8 (46 App. U.S.C. 1151 et seq.) to the Ready Reserve Force
9 component of the National Defense Reserve Fleet.

10 “(b) VESSEL CONSTRUCTION MANAGER.—

11 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall seek to
12 enter into an agreement with a vessel construction
13 manager under which the vessel construction man-
14 ager shall act as the agent for managing construc-
15 tion of the vessel that is the subject of a contract
16 of sale between a purchaser and the Secretary of
17 Transportation entered into under section 502(a) of
18 the Merchant Marine Act, 1936 (46 App. U.S.C.
19 1152(a)) after the date of enactment of this section.

20 “(2) REQUIREMENTS.—The Secretary shall re-
21 quire that a vessel construction manager described
22 in paragraph (1) ensures that vessels are built using
23 commercial standards, are militarily useful, and are

1 built using mature, proven, and repeatable design
2 concepts.

3 “(c) CONDITION.—

4 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The owner of any vessel
5 that is constructed after the date of enactment of
6 this section with a construction differential under
7 title V of the Merchant Marine Act, 1936 (46 App.
8 U.S.C. 1151 et seq.) and that is assigned as a
9 Ready Reserve Force vessel under subsection (a)
10 shall agree to provide effective control of such vessel
11 to the United States during—

12 “(A) a national emergency declared by
13 Presidential proclamation; or

14 “(B) a period for which the President has
15 proclaimed that the security of the national de-
16 fense makes it advisable.

17 “(2) COMPENSATION.—During a period de-
18 scribed in paragraph (1), the owner of a vessel de-
19 scribed in such paragraph shall be compensated for
20 the use of the vessel by the United States at the rate
21 the Secretary considers just compensation for the
22 use of the vessel.”.

23 (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of chapters
24 for subtitle V of title 46, United States Code is amended

1 by inserting after the item related to chapter 565 the fol-
 2 lowing:

“567. Use of Construction-Differential Vessels 56701”.

3 **SEC. 7. CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.**

4 (a) **CONSTRUCTION-DIFFERENTIAL.**—Title V of the
 5 Merchant Marine Act, 1936 (46 App. U.S.C. 1151 et seq.)
 6 is amended—

7 (1) in the heading for the title by striking
 8 “**SUBSIDY**”;

9 (2) by striking “subsidy” each place it appears;

10 (3) in section 501(a) by striking “construction-
 11 differential subsidies” and inserting “construction-
 12 differentials”

13 (b) **FOREIGN COMMERCE OR TRADE.**—Section 109 of
 14 title 46, United States Code, is amended—

15 (1) in the heading for subsection (b) by striking
 16 “**construction-differential subsidies**” and
 17 inserting “**construction-differentials**”; and

18 (2) in subsection (b) by striking “construction-
 19 differential subsidies” and inserting “construction-
 20 differentials”.

21 (c) **VESSEL OPERATIONS REVOLVING FUND.**—Sec-
 22 tion 50301(e)(3) of title 46, United States Code, is
 23 amended by striking “subsidy”.

1 (d) DEFINITION OF NEW VESSEL.—Section
2 53301(a)(2)(A)(i) of title 46, United States Code, is
3 amended by striking “subsidy”.

4 (e) OBLIGATION OF DEPOSITS AND PERIOD FOR
5 CONSTRUCTION OF CERTAIN VESSELS.—Section
6 53310(b) of title 46, United States Code, is amended by
7 striking “subsidy”.

8 (f) DEFINITION OF UNITED STATES FOREIGN
9 TRADE.—Section 53501(8) of title 46, United States
10 Code, is amended by striking “subsidy”.

11 (g) ELIGIBLE PURPOSES OF OBLIGATIONS.—Section
12 53706(a)(4) of title 46, United States Code, is amended
13 by striking “subsidy”.

14 (h) AMOUNT OF OBLIGATIONS.—Section 53709(b)(2)
15 of title 46, United States Code, is amended by striking
16 “subsidy” each place it appears.

17 (i) COMPENSATION.—Section 56303(c) of title 46,
18 United States Code, is amended—

19 (1) in the subsection heading by striking “SUB-
20 SIDY”; and

21 (2) by striking “subsidy” each place it appears.

22 (j) TYPES OF ADJUSTMENTS AND ARRANGE-
23 MENTS.—Section 56503(a)(1) of title 46, United States
24 Code, is amended by striking “operating-differential or

1 construction-differential subsidy” and inserting “oper-
2 ating-differential subsidy or construction-differential”.

3 (k) ACQUISITION OF VESSELS FOR ESSENTIAL SERV-
4 ICES, ROUTES, OR LINES.—Section 57105(b) of title 46,
5 United States Code, is amended by striking “subsidy”.

6 (l) CONSTRUCTION, RECONDITIONING, AND REMOD-
7 ELING OF VESSELS.—Section 57502(c) of title 46, United
8 States Code, is amended in the subsection heading by
9 striking “SUBSIDY”.

10 **SEC. 8. REPORTS.**

11 (a) REPORT ON NATIONAL DEFENSE RESERVE
12 FLEET.—Not later than 180 days after the date of enact-
13 ment of this Act, and every 2 years thereafter, the Sec-
14 retary of Transportation, in consultation with the Com-
15 mander of United States Transportation Command and
16 the Secretary of the Navy, shall submit to the Committee
17 on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of
18 Representatives and the subcommittees on Readiness and
19 Seapower and Projection Forces of the Committee on
20 Armed Services of the House of Representatives a re-
21 port—

22 (1) outlining a plan for using the construction-
23 differential authorized under title V of the Merchant
24 Marine Act, 1936 (46 App. U.S.C. 1151 et seq.) to
25 supplement the size and readiness of the National

1 Defense Reserve Fleet and to improve national ship-
2 building and shipping infrastructure; and

3 (2) describing ways in which an expanded and
4 creative view of the make-up of the Ready Reserve
5 Force component of the National Defense Reserve
6 Fleet and the construction-differential authorized
7 under title V of the Merchant Marine Act, 1936 (46
8 App. U.S.C. 1151 et seq.) can be used to ensure
9 Government access to other vessels that are critical
10 to national security, such as icebreakers, oil and nat-
11 ural gas tankers, and commercial shipping vessels
12 using small nuclear reactors.

13 (b) REPORT ON INCENTIVES TO SHIPPING COMPA-
14 NIES.—Not later than 180 days after the date of enact-
15 ment of this Act, the Secretary of Commerce shall submit
16 to the Committees on Armed Services, Energy and Com-
17 merce, and Transportation of the House of Representa-
18 tives and the Committees on Armed Services and Com-
19 merce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate a report
20 outlining how current provisions of law may be applied to
21 incentivize shipping companies to contract with the owners
22 of vessels described in section 56701 of title 46, United
23 States Code (as added by this Act), for the shipment of
24 goods.

1 (c) REPORT ON DE-RISKING MARITIME SECTOR.—
2 Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of
3 this Act, and every 2 years thereafter, the Secretary of
4 Defense and the Secretary of Homeland Security, in co-
5 ordination with the Secretaries of Treasury, Defense, and
6 State and the United States Trade Representative and the
7 Director of the Office of Management and Budget, shall
8 submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report
9 outlining a comprehensive strategy for de-risking the
10 United States maritime domain from the People’s Repub-
11 lic of China and other asymmetric or emerging maritime
12 threats.

13 (d) REPORT ON RESTRICTING FLOW OF CAPITAL TO
14 CCP.—Not later than 180 days after the date of enact-
15 ment of this Act, the heads of all Federal agencies shall
16 submit to Congress a report on ways and means for re-
17 stricting the flow of capital from the United States to Chi-
18 nese Communist Party maritime industries, which shall
19 include recommendations for promoting the flow of capital
20 within and between the United States and treaty allies of
21 the United States.

22 (e) REPORT ON TAX BREAKS.—Not later than 180
23 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary
24 of Commerce shall submit to Congress, and publish in the
25 Federal Register, a report describing, to incentivize the

1 use of United States-flagged ships and United States
2 ports, any potential—

3 (1) income tax breaks to merchant mariners
4 and shipyard support workers;

5 (2) corporate tax expense exemptions for
6 United States companies who ship goods on United
7 States-flagged vessels;

8 (3) modifying import and export duties to ac-
9 count for inflation and global market conditions;

10 (4) waiving the ad valorem tax for international
11 trade ships repaired overseas;

12 (5) standardization of burden sharing agree-
13 ments to mitigate the cost of merchant mariner pay;
14 and

15 (6) other rule change that enhances economic
16 and national security.

17 **SEC. 9. PRIVILEGING UNITED STATES-FLAGGED FLEET.**

18 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the
19 date of enactment of this Act, the heads of each Federal
20 agency with jurisdiction over maritime shipping and re-
21 lated shipyard workforces shall study privileging the
22 United States-flagged fleet engaged in international trade
23 and incentivizing United States entities to ship goods
24 using a United States-flagged carrier and maintain and
25 repair vessels in a United States or treaty allied shipyard.

1 (b) IMPLEMENTATION.—After a study is completed
2 under subsection (a), the head of the respective Federal
3 agency shall take such actions as are necessary to imple-
4 ment any recommendations under the study.

5 (c) REPORT.—After implementing recommendations
6 under subsection (b), the heads of each Federal agency
7 shall submit to Congress a report—

8 (1) describing any rules that have been amend-
9 ed to carry out this section; and

10 (2) requesting additional authorities not already
11 granted that are needed to carry out privileging the
12 United States-flagged fleet described in subsection
13 (a).

14 (d) MARITIME TRUST FUND STUDY.—

15 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Commerce
16 and the Secretary of Transportation, in consultation
17 with the United States Trade Representative, shall
18 study the creation of a Maritime Trust Fund and
19 propose options for resourcing such Fund through
20 new import and export fees that favor United
21 States-flagged shipping.

22 (2) CONTENT.—In carrying out the study
23 under paragraph (1), the Secretary of Commerce
24 and the Secretary of Transportation shall propose a
25 structure for the Fund that is designated to fund

1 Federal support to shipbuilding, shipping, and mari-
2 time workforce programs authorized by Congress.

3 **SEC. 10. CARGO PREFERENCES.**

4 Section 55305 of title 46, United States Code, is
5 amended—

6 (1) in subsection (a) by striking “50” and in-
7 serting “75”;

8 (2) by striking subsection (d) and inserting the
9 following:

10 “(d) WAIVERS.—Notwithstanding any other provi-
11 sion of law, when the President, the Secretary of Defense,
12 or the Secretary of Transportation declares the existence
13 of an emergency justifying a temporary waiver of this sec-
14 tion or section 55314, the President, the Secretary of De-
15 fense, or the Secretary of Transportation, following a de-
16 termination by the Maritime Administrator, acting in the
17 Administrator’s capacity as Director, National Shipping
18 Authority, of the non-availability of qualified United
19 States flag capacity at fair and reasonable rates for com-
20 mercial vessels of the United States to meet the require-
21 ments of this section or section 55314, may waive compli-
22 ance with such section to the extent, in the manner, and
23 on the terms the Maritime Administrator, acting in such
24 capacity, prescribes, and no other waivers of the require-

1 ments of this section or section 55314 shall be author-
2 ized.”.

3 **SEC. 11. PAYMENTS FOR MARITIME SECURITY PROGRAM.**

4 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 53106 of title 46, United
5 States Code, is amended—

6 (1) in subparagraph (B) by adding “and” at
7 the end; and

8 (2) by striking subparagraphs (C) through (F)
9 and inserting the following:

10 “(C) \$8,500,000 for each of fiscal years
11 2024 through 2035.”.

12 (b) MARITIME SECURITY FLEET.—

13 (1) TEST.—Not later than 180 days after the
14 date of enactment of this Act, the Commander of
15 the United States Transportation Command, in co-
16 ordination with the Secretary of the Navy and the
17 Administrator of the Maritime Administration, shall
18 devise an exercise to test the effective control of the
19 Maritime Security Fleet under chapter 531 of title
20 46, United States Code, in case of crisis or war.

21 (2) BRIEFING.—After completion of the exer-
22 cise under paragraph (1), the Commander shall sub-
23 mit to the appropriate committees of Congress a
24 briefing on the results of the exercise under para-
25 graph (1).

1 (3) BI-ANNUAL TESTING.—Beginning not later
2 than 1 year after the briefing is submitted under
3 paragraph (2), the Commander shall—

4 (A) biannually drill the Maritime Security
5 Fleet under chapter 531 of title 46, United
6 States Code, to test effective control of such
7 Fleet; and

8 (B) provide to Congress a briefing after
9 each such drill on the results of such drill.

10 **SEC. 12. INNOVATION INCUBATOR PROGRAM.**

11 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretaries of Defense, En-
12 ergy, and Transportation shall foster an innovation incu-
13 bator program for developing small nuclear reactor tech-
14 nology to extend the range and endurance of maritime ves-
15 sels.

16 (b) BRIEFING.—Not later than 1 year after the date
17 of enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter, the Sec-
18 retaries shall provide an annual briefing to the appropriate
19 committees of Congress on the progress of the program
20 established under subsection (a).

21 (c) FUNDING.—

22 (1) IN GENERAL.—In carrying out this section,
23 the Secretaries shall seek funding for the program
24 through the President’s Budget each year, as well as
25 existing appropriations for renewable energy from

1 the Department of Energy and the Infrastructure
2 Reduction Act.

3 (2) PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS.—To the
4 extent possible, the Secretaries shall seek to create
5 public-private partnerships for program investment
6 burden sharing.

7 **SEC. 13. ASSESSMENT ON MARINE INFRASTRUCTURE**
8 **READINESS.**

9 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the
10 date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator of the
11 Maritime Administration shall submit to Congress a re-
12 port on the status and resources needed to execute and
13 complete the necessary port, shipyard, and other infra-
14 structure reports to support the attainment of finance ar-
15 rangements for public and private improvement projects
16 meeting the standard of the private and public financial
17 sectors and banks and the Department of Commerce and
18 the Treasury.

19 (b) CONTENTS.—The report under subsection (a)
20 shall include—

21 (1) policy, resource, rulemaking, and authority
22 changes that will strengthen United States ship-
23 building, shipping, port and shipyard infrastructure,
24 and maritime workforce to meet a minimum estab-
25 lished level of capability and capacity to ensure eco-

1 nomic and national security interests of the United
2 States; and

3 (2) recommendations for how to employ mari-
4 time prosperity zones, by facilitating the creation of
5 Federal, State, or local special economic zones or
6 other capital funding package, to be focused on dis-
7 tinct geographic regions that are undeveloped, un-
8 derdeveloped, or developing, including explaining the
9 sort of financial, regulation, taxation, or other incen-
10 tives within such zones that would accelerate work-
11 force development, streamline the development of
12 new shipbuilding capacity, and modernize a des-
13 igned shipyard, port, or other facility or locations
14 in order to support the maritime workforce, United
15 States-flagged international fleet, shipbuilding, and
16 trade related maritime facilities, such as ports.

17 **SEC. 14. CONTRACTING.**

18 The Administrator of the Maritime Administration
19 shall, through a competitive bidding process, contract with
20 a reputable marketing, recruiting, and public relations
21 firm to develop and deploy branding, content, advertising
22 buys, and local and national engagement strategies to im-
23 plement the campaigns described in section 3.

1 **SEC. 15. CAMPAIGN OBJECTIVES.**

2 The campaigns described in section 3 shall focus on
3 the following objectives:

4 (1) Emphasize the importance of maritime work
5 for national security.

6 (2) Showcase the numerous opportunities avail-
7 able in the maritime domain.

8 (3) Highlight the shortage of workers in the
9 maritime sector.

10 (4) Promote the excitement, benefits, and ap-
11 peal of a career in the maritime industry.

12 (5) Inform potential workers of the points of
13 entry available to join and receive training for such
14 employment, including—

15 (A) the United States Merchant Marine
16 Academy;

17 (B) State and regional maritime academies
18 described in chapter 515 of title 46, United
19 States Code;

20 (C) merchant mariner and shipbuilding
21 labor union training facilities;

22 (D) merchant mariner and shipbuilding
23 apprenticeship programs approved by the Sec-
24 retary of Labor; and

25 (E) shipbuilding industry training pro-
26 grams.

1 (6) Inform potential workers of sources of fi-
2 nancial assistance for training for individuals inter-
3 ested in joining such industry.

4 (7) Attract workers to the United States mer-
5 chant marine and shipbuilding sectors.

6 **SEC. 16. TARGET AUDIENCE.**

7 In carrying out the campaigns under this Act, to
8 raise awareness about the importance of the merchant ma-
9 rine and shipbuilding sectors, the firm selected under sec-
10 tion 14 shall target a diverse audience, including—

11 (1) potential workers interested in maritime ca-
12 reers;

13 (2) educational institutions and the students of
14 such institutions considering vocational training in
15 maritime fields;

16 (3) military veterans and individuals seeking ca-
17 reer transitions; and

18 (4) the general public.

19 **SEC. 17. REPORTING AND ACCOUNTABILITY.**

20 (a) **QUARTERLY REPORT.**—Not later than 30 days
21 after the end of each quarter of each fiscal year during
22 the campaigns carried out under this Act, the firm se-
23 lected under section 4 shall submit to the Administrator
24 of the Maritime Administration and the relevant congres-
25 sional committees quarterly reports detailing the progress,

1 outreach, and impact of the campaigns, and their effec-
 2 tiveness in increasing applications for employment in the
 3 United States merchant marine and shipbuilding sectors.

4 (b) FINAL REPORT.—Not later than 60 days after
 5 the conclusion of the campaigns carried out under this
 6 Act, the firm selected under section 14 shall submit to
 7 the Administrator of the Maritime Administration and the
 8 relevant congressional committees a comprehensive final
 9 report.

10 **SEC. 18. SEALIFT CAPABILITY.**

11 (a) TITLE 46.—Title 46, United States Code, is
 12 amended by adding at the end the following:

13 “SUBCHAPTER IX—STRATEGIC SEALIFT

“90101. Objectives and policy.

“90102. Procurement, maintenance, and operation.

“90103. Sealift prioritization.

“90104. Interaction with programs.

“90105. International agreements.

“90106. Briefing on shipbuilding capacity.

“90107. Briefing on privileging fleet.

“90108. Report on privilege.

“90109. Report on requirements for sealift force deployment.

“90110. Report on domestic build requirements.

“90111. Assessment on marine infrastructure readiness.

14 **“§ 90101. Objectives and policy**

15 “(a) OBJECTIVES.—It is necessary for the national
 16 defense and the development of the domestic and foreign
 17 commerce of the United States that the United States
 18 have a United States-flag strategic sealift—

1 “(1) sufficient to meet defense deployment and
2 essential economic activities for the United States in
3 times of crisis or war;

4 “(2) sufficient to respond unilaterally to na-
5 tional security threats and ensure economic security
6 resilience for the Nation’s trade; and

7 “(3) built, operated, and maintained during
8 peace, crisis, and war primarily in the United States
9 to protect and ensure national security resiliency
10 and avoid foreign coercion of critical supply chains.

11 “(b) POLICY.—It is the policy of the United States
12 to encourage and aid the development and maintenance
13 of a strategic sealift satisfying the objectives described in
14 subsection (a).

15 **“§ 90102. Procurement, maintenance, and operation**

16 “(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Transportation
17 and the Secretary of Defense shall build, acquire, main-
18 tain, coordinate, support, and operate a sufficient and
19 privileged civil, commercial, and military sealift capability.

20 “(b) SUPPLEMENTAL CAPABILITY.—In establishing
21 sealift capability under this subtitle, the Secretary of
22 Transportation and Secretary of Defense shall continue to
23 operate a sufficient Maritime Security Program, Tanker
24 Security Program, Military Sealift Command, and Ready
25 Reserve Force to provide capacity and resiliency for uni-

1 lateral United States strategic sealift in peace, crisis, and
2 war.

3 **“§ 90103. Sealift prioritization**

4 “(a) IN GENERAL.—In maintaining, coordinating,
5 supporting, and operating sealift capability under this sub-
6 title, prioritization for sealift capability under this subtitle
7 during wartime and crisis shall be in the following order:

8 “(1) Commercial United States-flagged vessels.

9 “(2) United States Government owned and op-
10 erated sealift vessels.

11 “(3) Treaty allied flagged vessels.

12 “(4) Partner state flagged shipping vessels.

13 “(b) PRIORITIZATION.—In moving through the order
14 of priority under this section, the Secretary of Defense
15 shall determine the timing of moving through such pri-
16 ority.

17 **“§ 90104. Interaction with programs**

18 “The Secretaries of Transportation and Defense may
19 acquire, maintain, and repair ships from treaty allies
20 using best practices to be transportable between the Mari-
21 time Security Program, Tanker Security Program, Ready
22 Reserve Fleet, and the fleet under this subtitle.

23 **“§ 90105. International agreements**

24 “(a) IN GENERAL.—In maintaining, coordinating,
25 supporting, and operating sealift capability under this sub-

1 title, the Department of State shall lead an interagency
2 effort to establish and update agreements with treaty al-
3 lies of the United States and partners to meet wartime
4 sealift requirements of such allies and partners and aug-
5 ment United States sealift requirements during crisis and
6 war.

7 “(b) REPORT.—Not later than March 1, 2025, the
8 Secretary of State, in coordination with the Secretary of
9 Defense, shall provide to Congress an evaluation of the
10 status of treaty allies sealift assurances under subsection
11 (a), including an assessment of international agreements
12 described in such subsection and recommendations for up-
13 dating such agreements to reflect the global security envi-
14 ronment.

15 **“§ 90106. Briefing on shipbuilding capacity**

16 “(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than March 1, 2025,
17 the Secretary of Transportation and Secretary of Defense
18 shall brief Congress on the capacity of the United States
19 shipbuilding industry to meet the requirements to build,
20 maintain, and repair the strategic sealift fleet described
21 under this subtitle.

22 “(b) CONTENTS.—In briefing Congress under sub-
23 section (a), the Secretary of Transportation and Secretary
24 of Defense shall include an assessment and recommenda-
25 tions for improving the critical shipbuilding infrastructure,

1 workforce recruitment, development and retention, and
2 critical supply chains and critical repair parts of the
3 United States, including ways in which allies and partners
4 can contribute.

5 **“§ 90107. Briefing on privileging fleet**

6 “(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than March 1, 2025,
7 the Secretary of Transportation, in coordination with the
8 Secretaries of Homeland Security and Commerce and the
9 Federal Maritime Commission, shall brief Congress on
10 available options for establishing privileges for the United
11 States-owned commercial fleet participating in the inter-
12 national ocean-based trading market that will sustain and
13 significantly grow the United States-flagged fleet.

14 “(b) CONTENTS.—In briefing Congress under sub-
15 section (a), the Secretary shall provide recommendations
16 for and potential incentives, including a wide spectrum of
17 tax and credit incentives, for civil, commercial, and gov-
18 ernment entities, including allies and partners, to ship
19 goods on United States-flag fleet.

20 **“§ 90108. Report on privilege**

21 “(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than March 1, 2025,
22 the Secretary of Transportation, in coordination with the
23 Secretary of Commerce and the Director of the Office of
24 Management and Budget, shall submit to Congress a re-
25 port including ways to ensure the sealift fleet under this

1 subtitle is privileged in regulation, taxation, fees, and pol-
2 icy compared to foreign vessels conducting trade with a
3 United States domiciled entity, while remaining consistent
4 with the international obligations of the United States.

5 “(b) CONTENTS.—In submitting the report under
6 subsection (a), the Secretary of Transportation shall in-
7 clude options for regulating foreign flagged shipping trade
8 with the United States in order to sustain and grow the
9 Maritime Security Program, Tanker Security Program,
10 and other commercial United States-flag ships that com-
11 prise the sealift fleet under this subtitle.

12 **“§ 90109. Report on requirements for sealift force de-**
13 **ployment**

14 “(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than March 1, 2025,
15 the Secretary of Defense shall submit to Congress a report
16 on requirements to maintain, improve, or grow the Mari-
17 time Security Program, Tanker Security Program, and
18 Ready Reserve Force, the sealift fleet under this subtitle
19 over the decade following the date of enactment of this
20 section.

21 “(b) CONTENTS.—The report under subsection (a)
22 shall include a plan for making the Ready Reserve Force
23 active in international trade through a public-private part-
24 nership that enables financing, building, manning, oper-
25 ating, maintaining, and repairing the program vessels,

1 while guaranteeing assured effective control in times of
2 crisis or war.

3 **“§ 90110. Report on domestic build requirements**

4 “Not later than March 1, 2025, the Secretary of
5 Transportation shall submit to Congress a report that in-
6 cludes a plan to fund and phase in a domestic build re-
7 quirement for the Maritime Security Program, Tanker Se-
8 curity Program, Ready Reserve Fleet, and the sealift fleet
9 under this section, considering the full range of domestic
10 and treaty Ally civil, commercial, and government partner
11 arrangements and resource sharing.

12 **“§ 90111. Assessment on marine infrastructure readi-
13 ness**

14 “(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than March 1, 2026,
15 and every two years thereafter, the Secretaries of Defense,
16 Homeland Security, Commerce, and Transportation shall
17 provide Congress an assessment on—

18 “(1) the readiness and sufficiency of America’s
19 marine infrastructure, shipping industry, ship-
20 building industry, and United States-flagged, owned,
21 and operated fleets to meet strategic sealift require-
22 ments and operate in a contested environment;

23 “(2) the vulnerability of the United States’
24 economy to coercion or control from our nation’s

1 strategic competitors through the ocean-going
2 trades; and

3 “(3) critical infrastructure vulnerabilities in
4 America’s maritime transportation system, to in-
5 clude ports, shipyards, repair yards, inland water-
6 ways, and the domestic fleet, and foreign investment
7 in maritime infrastructure, and how to de-risk the
8 maritime sector for such vulnerabilities.

9 “(b) SECRETARY OF STATE.—Not later than March
10 1, 2026, and every two years thereafter, the Secretary of
11 State shall provide Congress an assessment on—

12 “(1) the current arrangements and agreements
13 with treaty allies for access to the global maritime
14 transportation infrastructure such as ports, harbors,
15 and waterways; and

16 “(2) the current assurances, arrangements, and
17 agreements with Treaty allies to augment United
18 States sealift capabilities in times of crisis and
19 war.”.

20 (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The analysis for Title
21 46, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end
22 the following:

“IX. Strategic Sealift 90101”.

23 **SEC. 19. ASSISTANCE FOR SMALL SHIPYARDS.**

24 Section 54101(i) of title 46, United States Code, is
25 amended by striking “fiscal year 2021 to carry out this

1 section \$20,000,000” and inserting “fiscal year 2025 to
2 carry out this section \$100,000,000”.

3 **SEC. 20. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS FOR MARI-**
4 **TIME ADMINISTRATION.**

5 There are authorized to be appropriated to the De-
6 partment of Transportation for fiscal years 2025 through
7 2035 the following amounts:

8 (1) \$10,000,000 for a targeted campaign pro-
9 moting the virtues of work in the United States
10 Merchant Marine for the purpose of sailing in inter-
11 national trade, including Military Sealift Command
12 mariner positions, highlighting the critical need for
13 skilled workers in this sector, and to attract workers
14 to this sector.

15 (2) \$5,000,000 for a targeted campaign pro-
16 moting the virtues of work in the United States
17 shipbuilding industry, highlighting the critical need
18 for skilled workers in this sector, and to attract
19 workers to this sector.

20 **SEC. 21. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS FOR MARI-**
21 **TIME ADMINISTRATION.**

22 There is authorized to be appropriated to the Depart-
23 ment of Transportation for fiscal year 2024, for programs
24 associated with maintaining the United States Merchant
25 Marine for expenses necessary for the loan guarantee pro-

1 gram authorized under chapter 537 of title 46, United
2 States Code, \$103,020,000, of which—

3 (1) \$100,000,000 may be for the cost (as such
4 term is defined in section 502(5) of the Federal
5 Credit Reform Act of 1990 (2 U.S.C. 661a(5)) of
6 loan guarantees under the program; and

7 (2) \$3,020,000 may be used for administrative
8 expenses relating to loan guarantee commitments
9 under the program.

10 **SEC. 22. EFFECTIVE DATE.**

11 Not later than 1 year after the date on which
12 amounts authorized under this Act are appropriated, the
13 Administrator of the Maritime Administration shall com-
14 plete the action described in section 14.

15 **SEC. 23. SUNSET CLAUSE.**

16 Any unobligated amount authorized under this Act
17 shall expire 3 years after the date on which such amount
18 is appropriated.

19 **SEC. 24. DEFINITION.**

20 In this Act, the term “relevant congressional commit-
21 tees” means—

22 (1) the Committee on Appropriations, the Com-
23 mittee on Armed Services, and the Committee on
24 Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of
25 Representatives; and

1 (2) the Committee on Appropriations, the Com-
2 mittee on Armed Services, and the Committee on
3 Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Sen-
4 ate.

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