



West Coast Sailors

Official Organ of the Sailors' Union of the Pacific

Volume LXXXIX No. 3



SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

Monday, March 16, 2026



Sailors' Union at 141

The Sailors' Union of the Pacific celebrates its 141st anniversary after being organized on March 6, 1885, on Folsom Street Wharf in San Francisco. A meeting of about three hundred seamen at 7:30 P.M. gathered to consider what steps should be taken toward forming a permanent protective union at once. Two hundred and twenty two men were enrolled, \$34.60 was collected, and thus born the organization which is known today as the Sailors' Union of the Pacific. We have come a long way in the 140 years, but the past should never be forgotten. There was no National Labor Relations Act at this time,

in fact it wasn't until 1935, 50 years later when this became law. In 1885, there were no laws that addressed collective bargaining rights to organize workers. Sailors were at the beck and calls of the shipowner, the crimp, bucko mates, and masters. Recognition, respect, and improved conditions aboard the ship did not come easy, but under our tenacious leaders' obstacles were overcome. Once the Union was formed the real fight began, and after a 20 year fight by Andrew Furuseth (March 12, 1854) to free the seamen from involuntary servitude the Seamen's Act was signed into law by President Woodrow Wilson on March 4, 1915. It almost doesn't sound believable today, but the law abolished the practice of imprisoning or forcing sailors to remain on ships against their will, mandated lifeboats for all passengers and crew, and required decent accommodations, food, and safety measures for sailors on U.S. ships.

Harry Lundeberg (March 25, 1901) took over the helm in 1936 and for the next 21 years until his death in 1957, fought long and hard for better conditions and wages for our membership. He fought the Communists on the Waterfront, kicking them out of the SUP and off West Coast ships. He pioneered the pension, and welfare plans of the maritime industry, and brought all around conditions for members to undreamed of heights.

Simply put, March is Sailors' month.

Operation Epic Fury: U.S. and Israel Launch Major Strike Campaign Against Iran

The United States launched a sweeping military campaign against Iran on February 28th, beginning a conflict that has quickly reshaped security across the Middle East. The opening phase of the war, known as Operation Epic Fury, marked one of the largest coordinated air and naval strike operations conducted by U.S. forces in decades. The operation began in the early hours of Feb. 28th when U.S. and Israeli forces carried out a wave of coordinated strikes against Iranian military targets. Defense officials said the objective of the first phase was to cripple Iran's ability to launch retaliatory attacks by targeting missile sites, command centers and facilities tied to Iran's nuclear and drone programs.

According to U.S. officials, hundreds of precision-guided weapons were used in the opening hours. Long-range bombers, carrier-based aircraft and cruise missiles fired from naval vessels in the Persian Gulf and sur-

rounding waters struck military installations across multiple regions of Iran. Among the primary targets were facilities operated by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, the powerful military force that oversees much of Iran's missile program and regional proxy networks. Several bases believed to house ballistic missile launchers were hit in the initial strike packages.

Pentagon officials described the strategy as a "shock and paralysis" campaign designed to quickly degrade Iran's command structure and military infrastructure. The opening wave focused heavily on radar installations, air-defense systems and communications hubs in order to clear the way for follow-on strikes. The operation also reportedly targeted senior leadership tied to Iran's military command. Iranian state media confirmed that several high-ranking officers were killed during the initial bombardment, though full casualty figures re-

main unclear.

The strikes triggered immediate retaliation from Tehran. Within hours, Iran launched dozens of ballistic missiles and armed drones toward U.S. military facilities and allied positions across the region. Several projectiles were aimed at American installations in the Persian Gulf, while others targeted Israel. Regional air-defense systems, including U.S.-supplied interceptors, shot down many of the incoming weapons. Still, the attacks heightened fears that the conflict could quickly spiral into a broader regional war.

The sudden escalation prompted multiple Middle Eastern countries to temporarily close their airspace as airlines rerouted flights away from the conflict zone. Global markets reacted swiftly, with oil prices jumping amid concerns that fighting could disrupt tanker traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most critical

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Action Plan Seeks to Rebuild America's Merchant Marine

The Trump administration has released a sweeping new strategy aimed at revitalizing the nation's maritime sector, publishing its long-anticipated "America's Maritime Action Plan" generally referred to as MAP on February 13, 2026. The plan outlines a broad set of initiatives designed to strengthen the U.S. shipping industry, expand the American-flag fleet, and bolster the country's maritime workforce. The MAP stems from an executive directive signed by Donald Trump on April 9, 2025, titled "Restoring America's Maritime Dominance." That order directed federal agencies to develop a coordinated national strategy to reverse the long-term decline of the U.S.-flag merchant fleet and rebuild the nation's shipbuilding and maritime industrial base.

Administration officials say the action plan represents the most comprehensive federal maritime policy initiative in decades. The report highlights concerns that the United States

currently relies heavily on foreign-flag vessels for international shipping, leaving the country vulnerable during times of crisis or conflict. By comparison, nations such as China and South Korea have invested heavily in shipbuilding capacity and commercial fleets, dramatically expanding their maritime influence over the past two decades.

The MAP calls for several key policy reforms, including expanded incentives for U.S.-flag shipping companies, increased federal investment in domestic shipyards, and stronger support for maritime training and workforce development programs. The plan also emphasizes modernizing the nation's shipbuilding infrastructure and strengthening partnerships between government, labor unions, and private industry.

One major focus of the strategy is the U.S. Merchant Marine, which plays a critical role in supporting military logistics during wartime and national emer-

gencies. Officials noted that the number of U.S.-flag commercial vessels engaged in international trade has steadily declined for decades, raising concerns within the defense community about sealift readiness.

To address these concerns, the MAP proposes expanding existing programs such as the Maritime Security Program and exploring new financial incentives to encourage shipowners to register vessels under the U.S. flag. It also recommends increased funding for maritime academies and training programs to ensure a steady pipeline of qualified mariners.

Labor organizations representing American seafarers welcomed the plan's emphasis on workforce development and fleet expansion. Union leaders have long argued that rebuilding the U.S. merchant fleet is essential not only for national security but also for maintaining thousands of well-paying maritime jobs.

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Periodicals postage paid at San Francisco, CA (USPS 675-180)



SUP Honor Roll

Voluntary contributions from the membership to the following funds:

Dues-Paying Pensioners

- Diane Ferrari.....BK#2251
- Hannu KurppaBK#3162
- Gunnar Lundeborg.....BK#4090
- Vince O'Halloran.....BK#2463
- James ClayBK#4794
- Mike WorthBK#3629
- Michael DirksenBK#2739
- Terrence LaneBK#4107
- Teofilo RojasBK#3194
- Leo Moore.....BK#6492
- Duke Maringer.....BK#6518
- Lymwel GadorBK#3024
- Don Nichols.....BK#2470
- Hamilton Parone.....BK#3883

Political Fund

- Luke Satsuma\$50
- Jonathon Anderson Kaisa\$25
- Isnin Idris\$100
- Joseph Dulay.....\$10
- Joshua Dickey\$50
- Nassal Surian.....\$50
- Vincent O'Halloran\$200
- Robin Colonas\$100
- Robert Leeper\$260
- Victor Ramos.....\$20
- John Hartley\$50
- Steve Swinson\$25

West Coast Sailors

- Vermilo Visaya\$10
- Nassal Surian.....\$50

Organization/General Fund

- Jonathon Anderson Kaisa\$25
- Ronald Reed\$50
(In Lieu Of Dues Increase)
- Philip Romei.....\$150 (In Lieu Of Dues Increase)
- Nassal Surian.....\$50
- Christopher Bartolo.....\$20

Final Departures

David Shands, Book #7483. Born in California in 1947. Joined SUP in 1965. Died on December 21, 2025. (Pensioner)

Robert Nixon, Jr., C-3095. Born in New York in 1965. Joined SUP in 2024. Died on October 31, 2025. (Active)

SUP Meetings 2026

HQ	Branches	HQ	Branches
April 13	April 20	August 10	August 17
May 11	May 18	September 14	September 21
June 8	June 15	October 13	October 19
July 13	July 20	November 9	November 16
		December 14	December 21

WELFARE NOTES

Current Addresses

Please be sure that the Plans Administrative Office has your current mailing address so we can send you important notices regarding plan changes or any other information you may need. Also, please notify us if your email address has changed.

Unfit For Duty

You must have doctor's documentation of your Unfit-For-Duty time sent to the SUP Welfare Plan if you become Not Fit-For-Duty. Because of Privacy Laws, shipping companies will not automatically send the information to us if you are injured on the ship. You must request that the shipping company do so.

We do not want extensive medical information, lab reports, x-rays, or doctor notes. The documentation should indicate the date you became Unfit-For-Duty, the dates you will be unable to work, and the likely return to work date, along with the dates you have seen the doctor. Follow up documentation should be sent periodically about every two months if you remain unable to work for an extended period of time.

Fit-For-Duty documentation is also required when you are able to work again. Modified activity is still considered Unfit- For-Duty.

With respect to the SIU Pacific District Pension Plan, under certain circumstances time spent absent from work due to illness or injuries which disable you for at least 90 continuous days may be credited as covered employment up to a maximum of 200 days per year (600 days maximum) provided:

- a. The illness began within 180 days of your most recent day of covered employment; or
 - b. The injury occurred in the course of (and arose out of) covered employment
- Periods of disability absence between your last day of active covered employment and your retirement date will not be counted as days of covered employment under this provision.

- Michelle Chang, Administrator michelle@marinerbenefits.org,
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- Brian Farmer, MPP & 401(k) Plans, Death Benefits brian@marinerbenefits.org
- Gina Jew, Claims gina@marinerbenefits.org
- Michael Jacyna, Eligibility michael@marinerbenefits.org
- Hazel Ywan, SIU-PD Trusts Accountant hazel@marinerbenefits.org
- Dau Naw, SIU-PD Contribution Accountants Payable dnaw@marinerbenefits.org
- Derek Chang, SIU-PD Supplemental Benefits, Contributions derek@marinerbenefits.org
- Dan Gaipa, SIU-PD Pension Plan dan@marinerbenefits.org
- Training Representative Berit Eriksson 206-551-1870 berittrainrep@sbcglobal.net
- SUP Welfare Plan 730 Harrison Street Suite 415, San Francisco, CA 94107
- Phone Numbers: 415-778-5490 or 1-800-796-8003 Fax: 415-778-5495
- SIU-PD Pension 415-764-4987 SIU-PD Supplemental Benefits 415-764-4991
- Seafarers Medical Center 415-392-3611

Membership and Ratings Committee

The Committee met on March 9, 2026 and found the following members eligible for advancement in seniority and rating stamps in the various departments.

Name and Membership	Number	Seatime	Rating	Seniority
Reymund Gabarra	BK#3051	6 yrs.	A.B.	A
Frank Martin, III	Bk#6561	6 yrs.	A.B.	A
Andrae Jackson	C-3145	30 days	O.S.	C
Paul Brewer	C-3146	30 days	A.B.	C
Gerald Durham	C-3147	30 days	A.B.	C
Christopher Throm	C-3148	30 days	A.B.	C
Abdulrahman Hasson	C-3149	30 days	O.S.	C
Richard Thompson, Jr.	C-3150	30 days	O.S.	C

Ratings: Bosun Stamp

Perciverando Quiteles	Bk#101
Eric McDonald	Bk#6556

Ratings Committee: Carl Turner BK#3292, Ali Ghaleb B-19710, and Robert Reed BK#3203.



From left to right: Robert Reed, Carl Turner, and Ali Ghaleb served on the March Membership and Ratings Committee. Photo by Matt Henning



AB Yvette Cavan and Training Representative Berit Eriksson at HQ. Fair winds and following seas to Berit as she begins the next great voyage of retirement. After years of steady leadership and dedication, she has earned the chance to drop anchor and enjoy calmer waters. Wishing you smooth sailing and many new adventures ahead!

SUP Pensioners Join the Ranks of Retirement

Wilfredo Caido	Permit #19417	3/1/2026
Edwin Suguitan	Bk #7501	3/1/2026

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Published monthly by the Sailors Union of the Pacific (an affiliate of the Seafarers International Union of North America, AFL-CIO), Headquarters, 450 Harrison St., San Francisco, CA 94105. Phone: 415-777-3400. FAX: 415-777-5088. Dispatcher: 415-777-3616. Website: www.sailors.org. Periodicals' postage paid at San Francisco. (USPS 675-180). Printed by Dakota Press Co., a Union shop. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to West Coast Sailors, 450 Harrison St., San Francisco, CA 94105.

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Strategic Petroleum Reserve Release Targets Global Supply Crunch

The United States announced Wednesday, March 11th that it will release 172 million barrels of crude oil from its Strategic Petroleum Reserve beginning next week, part of a coordinated 400-million-barrel emergency release agreed by the International Energy Agency (IEA) and its member nations. The historic release comes as global oil markets grapple with the fallout from escalating conflict in the Middle East and a series of attacks on commercial shipping vessels in the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most critical maritime chokepoints. The strait normally handles roughly 20% of global seaborne oil shipments, making disruptions particularly consequential for energy markets.

Energy Secretary Chris Wright said

the drawdown would start next week and is expected to continue for roughly 120 days, depending on planned discharge rates. The release is part of the IEA's broader emergency response to stabilize oil prices and ensure supply continuity amid geopolitical uncertainty. "The U.S. Strategic Petroleum Reserve release is designed to mitigate immediate disruptions and support global energy security," Wright said. He added that the coordinated international effort reflects the urgency of maintaining steady supplies for both U.S. consumers and global markets.

Oil prices have surged in recent weeks as tensions in the Middle East intensified. Attacks on commercial vessels and oil infrastructure in the Persian Gulf have

added pressure to an already tight market, prompting nations to take emergency measures to secure supply. Analysts warn that without swift intervention, disruptions could further exacerbate volatility in global energy markets.

The SPR, the world's largest government-controlled crude reserve, has been used historically during crises to stabilize markets, including during hurricanes, natural disasters, and prior geopolitical conflicts. The current drawdown is notable not only for its size, making it one of the largest coordinated releases in history — but also for its timing, coming amid the ongoing maritime disruptions in a region that supplies a significant portion of the world's oil.

IEA member nations collectively agreed

to release a total of 400 million barrels, with the U.S. contribution of 172 million barrels representing the largest share of the coordinated effort. Officials say the move is intended to buy time for markets to adjust, ensuring that critical energy supplies remain accessible despite continued uncertainty in the Persian Gulf.

As the drawdown begins next week, attention will remain focused on how shipping lanes are restored and whether the emergency release succeeds in dampening price spikes for consumers worldwide. While it is a short-term solution, industry analysts emphasize that the long-term stability of oil markets will ultimately depend on resolving the geopolitical tensions driving the current crisis.

Global Shipping Leaders Mark 20th Anniversary of Maritime Labor Convention

The Trump administration has released a sweeping new strategy aimed at revitalizing the nation's maritime sector, publishing its long-anticipated "America's Maritime Action Plan" generally referred to as MAP on February 13, 2026. The plan outlines a broad set of initiatives designed to strengthen the U.S. shipping industry, expand the American-flag fleet, and bolster the country's maritime workforce. The MAP stems from an executive directive signed by Donald Trump on April 9, 2025, titled "Restoring America's Maritime Dominance." That order directed federal agencies to develop a coordinated national strategy to reverse the long-term decline of the U.S.-flag merchant fleet and rebuild the nation's shipbuilding and maritime industrial base.

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One major focus of the strategy is the U.S. Merchant Marine, which plays a critical role in supporting military logistics during wartime and national emergencies. Officials noted that the number of U.S.-flag commercial vessels engaged in international trade has steadily declined for decades, raising concerns within the defense community

about seafarer readiness.

To address these concerns, the MAP proposes expanding existing programs such as the Maritime Security Program and exploring new financial incentives to encourage shipowners to register vessels under the U.S. flag. It also recommends increased funding for maritime academies and training programs to ensure a steady pipeline of qualified mariners.

Labor organizations representing American seafarers welcomed the plan's emphasis on workforce development and fleet expansion. Union leaders have long argued that rebuilding the U.S. merchant fleet is essential not only for national security but also for maintaining thousands of well-paying maritime jobs.

The action plan also highlights the importance of the Merchant Marine Act of 1920 (Jones Act), which requires vessels transporting goods between U.S. ports to be built in the United States, owned by American companies, and crewed by U.S. citizens. The administration reaffirmed its support for the law, describing it as a

cornerstone of domestic maritime policy and a key tool in maintaining shipbuilding capacity.

In addition to domestic shipping, the MAP calls for expanding the country's presence in global maritime trade and strengthening cooperation with allied nations on shipping security and supply chain resilience. Industry analysts say the plan's ultimate impact will depend on whether Congress provides the funding and legislative changes needed to implement its recommendations. If fully realized, supporters argue the initiative could mark a turning point for an industry that has struggled with declining fleet numbers, aging infrastructure, and growing international competition.

For now, the administration's maritime blueprint signals a renewed federal focus on restoring America's maritime capabilities, an effort officials say is critical for both economic strength and national security in an increasingly competitive global shipping landscape.

Jesse Jackson, Civil Rights Leader and Labor Ally, Dies at 84

The Rev. Jesse Jackson, the civil rights leader and two-time presidential candidate who spent more than five decades at the intersection of racial justice, labor rights and electoral politics, died on February 17th, closing a chapter on one of the most enduring voices of the modern American protest movement. He was 84.

Jackson's life traced the arc of the postwar civil rights struggle. Born in Greenville, South Carolina, in 1941, he rose to national prominence as a protégé of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. Jackson worked with King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, helping to organize voter registration drives and economic justice campaigns across the South. He was present in Memphis in 1968 when King was assassinated during a strike by Black sanitation workers, a formative moment that cemented Jackson's lifelong bond with organized labor.

In the years that followed, Jackson founded Operation PUSH and later the Rainbow/PUSH Coalition, advocating for minority hiring, corporate accountability and expanded economic opportunity. Central to that mission was a partnership with unions, which he saw as a vehicle not only for workplace gains but for broader social change.

Jackson's alliance with labor leaders often placed him on picket lines and at convention halls. He supported the United Farm Workers in their grape boycotts, marched with striking public employees and called for federal job programs to combat urban unemployment. His "Rainbow Coalition" — a term he popularized during his 1984 presidential campaign, sought to unite Black voters, Latinos, farmers, peace activists and union members into a multiracial political force.

He made history in 1984 and again in 1988 when he sought the Democratic nomination for president, becoming one of the first Black candidates to mount viable national campaigns. Backed by key labor constituencies, Jackson won several primaries and caucuses, pushing the Democratic Party to adopt more progressive planks on voting rights, sanctions against apartheid South Africa and protections for workers. While never securing the nomination, Jackson's campaigns reshaped party politics. They demonstrated the growing clout of organized labor's diverse membership and highlighted issues such as plant closures and wage stagnation that would dominate political debate in the decades to come.

Jackson's relationship with unions was



not without friction. Some labor leaders bristled at his independent political ambitions, and at times his advocacy extended beyond traditional labor priorities. But his presence on strike lines, from hotel workers to dockworkers, reinforced his message that civil rights and workers' rights were inseparable.

In later years, Jackson's public appearances slowed as he battled Parkinson's disease, diagnosed in 2017. Yet he remained an elder statesman of the movement, offering counsel to younger activists and speaking out on behalf of

low-wage workers and voting access. Tributes poured in from union halls and political leaders alike, many crediting Jackson with broadening the definition of labor solidarity. "He understood that dignity at work is a civil right," one longtime organizer said.

Jackson is survived by his wife, Jacqueline, and their children. His legacy endures in the coalitions he built, across race, region and occupation, and in the belief that economic justice is fundamental to democracy.

U.S. Treasury Issues Sanctions Wind-Down for Russian Oil Amid Global Energy Tensions

The U.S. Treasury Department on Thursday, March 12th issued a new authorization allowing certain Russian oil shipments already at sea to complete their voyages, a move aimed at mitigating disruptions to global energy markets amid escalating tensions around the Strait of Hormuz.

The authorization, issued by the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), permits transactions necessary for the sale, delivery, or offloading of Russian-origin crude oil and petroleum products that are already loaded onto vessels. The license remains in effect until April 11, providing a one-month window for these cargoes to reach their intended destinations. "Ensuring the safe completion of oil shipments already in transit helps maintain stability in global energy markets while preserving the integrity of our sanctions programs," an OFAC spokesperson said.

Under the authorization, routine

maritime services required to complete these voyages are allowed. This includes activities such as bunkering, vessel management, crewing, insurance, classification, piloting, and salvage operations. These measures are intended to prevent operational disruptions while ensuring compliance with U.S. sanctions targeting Russian energy exports.

The move comes as energy markets continue to grapple with uncertainty caused by the escalating conflict in the Middle East and ongoing tensions surrounding the Strait of Hormuz, a vital chokepoint through which roughly a fifth of the world's seaborne oil passes. Any disruption in the flow of oil through the region has the potential to cause sharp price volatility and supply constraints, heightening the urgency of coordinated regulatory measures.

Analysts say the Treasury's wind-down authorization provides clarity for shipping companies and energy traders

navigating the complex web of sanctions regulations. Without such guidance, vessels carrying Russian-origin oil risked being delayed or denied port access, creating logistical bottlenecks and market uncertainty. "This authorization allows companies to manage the completion of existing contracts without running afoul of U.S. sanctions," said Marina Alvarez, an energy policy analyst. "It's a carefully calibrated approach that balances market stability with enforcement of international sanctions."

While the authorization provides temporary relief for cargoes already at sea, U.S. officials emphasized that it does not alter the broader sanctions framework. New shipments of Russian oil remain strictly prohibited under existing OFAC regulations, which continue to target Russia's energy sector as part of the U.S. response to its military activities.

Global shipping firms have welcomed the move, noting that it reduces the risk

of operational disruptions and financial losses. However, market watchers caution that the broader energy landscape remains volatile, with prices sensitive to both geopolitical developments and compliance uncertainties.

The one-month window underscores the temporary nature of the measure, signaling that the U.S. remains committed to enforcing sanctions while providing a limited period for already underway shipments to reach their destinations. Stakeholders across the maritime and energy sectors will be closely monitoring developments over the next several weeks as these cargoes make their way to ports around the world. The authorization reflects the challenges of balancing economic sanctions enforcement with the practical realities of global energy trade, particularly in regions where geopolitical tensions threaten the flow of critical resources.

Roxanne Brown Sworn In as First Female President of the United Steelworkers

The United Steelworkers (USW) has sworn in Roxanne Brown as its new international president, marking a historic moment for one of North America's largest and most influential labor unions. Brown, a longtime union leader and advocate for workers' rights, took the oath of office before a gathering of union members, staff and labor allies, pledging to strengthen collective bargaining power and expand organizing efforts across key industries. She becomes the first woman to lead the Pittsburgh-based union in its decades-long history.

In her remarks, Brown emphasized unity and solidarity at a time of significant economic and political change. "Our union was built on the belief that working people deserve dignity, fair wages and safe workplaces," she said. "We will continue to fight for strong contracts and ensure that no worker is left behind." The United Steelworkers represents 850,000 workers and retirees in the United States, Canada and the Caribbean, spanning industries that include steel, aluminum, paper, rubber, chemicals, health care and education. The union has played a central role in

major labor battles over wages, workplace safety and trade policy.

Brown steps into the role as unions across the country experience renewed momentum. Organizing drives have expanded in manufacturing, logistics and service sectors, while labor negotiations in heavy industry have drawn national attention. Brown said her administration will focus on aggressive organizing, enforcing existing contracts and advocating for pro-worker policies at the federal and provincial levels. Prior to her election, Brown served in senior leadership roles within the union, where she built a reputation as a skilled negotiator and organizer. She has frequently spoken about the importance of diversifying union leadership and engaging younger workers to secure the labor movement's future.

Labor leaders from across the country offered congratulations, noting the symbolic and practical significance of her election. Representatives from the AFL-CIO called Brown's leadership "a powerful example of the strength and diversity of today's labor movement." Industry representatives, meanwhile,



signaled a willingness to work with the new president while acknowledging that negotiations may remain tough. Brown made clear that collaboration would not come at the expense of members' interests. "Our mission is clear," she said. "We will bargain hard, we will organize boldly, and we will stand together."

As she begins her tenure, Brown in-

herits both challenges and opportunities, from navigating global trade pressures to addressing workplace automation and safety concerns. For rank-and-file members gathered at the swearing-in ceremony, however, the message was straightforward: the union's next chapter has begun.

Bipartisan Lawmakers Introduce FERRIES Act to Boost Funding for U.S. Ferry Systems

A bipartisan group of lawmakers has introduced legislation aimed at dramatically increasing federal investment in ferry transportation systems across the United States, citing the essential role ferries play in moving passengers, supporting regional economies, and sustaining maritime jobs. The proposed Federal Enhancement and Revitalization of Reliable Infrastructure for Essential Seaways Act, known as the FERRIES Act, was introduced last week by Reps. Nicole Malliotakis (R-N.Y.), Emily Randall (D-Wash.), Nick Begich (R-Alaska), and John Garamendi (D-Calif.). The legislation would significantly expand federal support for ferry infrastructure through a combination of the Highway Trust Fund, advanced appropriations, and authorized appropriations.

Supporters say the bill recognizes ferries as critical transportation links for coastal and island communities, particularly in states such as Alaska, Washington, New York, and California,

where waterborne transit serves as a daily lifeline for commuters and commerce. At the center of the proposal is a major expansion of the passenger ferry grant program administered by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Under the legislation, funding for the Passenger Ferry Grant Program would increase to as much as \$550 million annually. Over the next five years, the bill would authorize \$300 million in funding, including \$100 million drawn directly from the Highway Trust Fund. In addition, the measure would provide \$200 million per year in advanced appropriations to support long-term planning and vessel investments.

The legislation would also boost funding for the Ferry Boat Program managed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Funding for that program would rise to \$160 million annually through the Highway Trust Fund, with a \$2 million increase each year thereafter. The bill would also allocate an additional \$100 million per year in advanced appro-

priations to strengthen ferry infrastructure nationwide. Lawmakers behind the measure emphasized that ferry services are often the only reliable transportation option for remote communities and play a key role in regional transportation networks. Increased funding, they say, would allow ferry operators to expand routes, replace aging vessels, and improve reliability.

The bill also proposes a significant expansion of the FTA's Rural Ferry Grant Program, which assists ferry systems serving smaller or isolated communities. Funding for that program could reach up to \$550 million annually under the proposal. The legislation would authorize \$300 million in funding, including \$100 million from the Highway Trust Fund, while providing an additional \$250 million in advanced appropriations each year.

In addition to expanding existing programs, the FERRIES Act would create a new federal initiative focused on fleet modernization and domestic

shipbuilding. The proposed Ferry Fleet Modernization and Shipyard Job Creation Grant Program would provide financial assistance to ferry operators seeking to upgrade vessels or transition to alternative fuels, including hybrid and fully electric propulsion systems.

The program would provide \$100 million annually in advanced appropriations along with \$140 million in authorized funding each year. Advocates say the initiative could help reduce emissions while creating new work for American shipyards and maritime workers. Backers of the legislation argue that modernizing the nation's ferry systems will improve transportation reliability, strengthen maritime infrastructure, and support thousands of skilled jobs in shipbuilding and vessel operations.

The FERRIES Act now heads to congressional committees for consideration, where lawmakers will debate its funding levels and potential role in the next long-term federal transportation package.

Moderate Democrats Warn Party Against 'Tacking Left' in Upcoming Primaries

A growing number of moderate lawmakers within the Democratic Party are urging party leaders and voters to resist calls for a sharp ideological shift to the left during upcoming primary elections, arguing that such a move could weaken the party's ability to compete in closely contested districts. The debate has intensified as Democrats begin preparing for the next congressional election cycle. Several centrist members of the party say primary contests that reward more ideologically progressive candidates could make it harder to retain swing districts that are critical for maintaining a majority in Congress.

Moderate Democrats argue that voters in competitive suburban and rural districts often favor pragmatic policies over more sweeping proposals championed by the party's progressive wing. They

say candidates who campaign on more moderate platforms have historically been more successful in areas where elections are decided by narrow margins. Some lawmakers point to the party's recent electoral map as evidence. Districts that flipped to Democratic control in recent years often include a mix of independent voters and moderate Republicans who crossed party lines. According to centrists, those voters may be less receptive to candidates perceived as ideologically far to the left. "The path to winning national elections still runs through the middle," one Democratic strategist said, noting that the party must appeal to a broad coalition that includes independents and moderate voters.

The tension reflects a long-running ideological debate within the Democratic Party. Progressive activists and

lawmakers have pushed for policies such as expanded federal social programs, aggressive climate initiatives, and structural political reforms. Supporters argue those ideas energize younger voters and address systemic economic and environmental challenges. However, moderate Democrats warn that highly competitive primaries can sometimes push candidates to adopt positions that later become liabilities in general elections.

Political analysts note that primary voters often differ from the broader electorate. Turnout in primaries tends to be lower and more dominated by highly engaged party activists, which can lead candidates to emphasize policies favored by the most politically active voters. Some moderates fear that this dynamic could produce nominees who struggle to win in districts where general election voters

hold more centrist views.

At the same time, progressive leaders argue that bold policy proposals are necessary to inspire turnout and address economic inequality, healthcare costs, and climate change. They contend that voter enthusiasm is critical to winning national elections and that strong progressive messaging can motivate key constituencies.

The internal debate highlights the balancing act facing Democratic leaders as they look toward the next election cycle: energizing the party's progressive base while maintaining appeal among moderates and independents. With control of Congress often hinging on a handful of competitive districts, strategists across the party acknowledge that the outcome of upcoming primaries could play a decisive role in shaping the Democratic Party's national electoral prospects.

COSCO Suspends Balboa Port Calls Amid Panama-China Dispute

Tensions between China and Panama escalated this week after Chinese shipping giant China COSCO Shipping Corporation suspended its services at the key Pacific terminal of Port of Balboa following a dispute involving the facility's control. According to a report published March 11 by Bloomberg L.P., the state-owned shipping company halted all vessel departures and arrivals at the port after Beijing warned Panama it could face a "heavy price" for what China described as a forced takeover of the terminal from CK Hutchison Holdings, the Hong Kong-based conglomerate that has long been involved in port operations in the region.

Local newspaper La Prensa reported that COSCO issued a notice to customers dated March 10 announcing the immediate suspension of its services at Balboa. The company said all confirmed bookings would be cancelled, though

cargo that had already arrived at the terminal would continue to be processed to avoid further disruption. The move could have ripple effects across global shipping routes, as the port sits at the Pacific entrance to the Panama Canal, one of the world's most critical maritime trade corridors. Balboa serves as a major hub for container ships moving cargo between Asia, the Americas, and Europe.

Shipping analysts say COSCO's decision underscores the geopolitical tensions increasingly shaping global trade and port operations. China has invested heavily in port infrastructure worldwide over the past two decades, seeking to secure reliable logistics networks for its export-driven economy. Beijing's warning signals that it views Panama's move against Hutchison as a challenge to those interests.

The dispute centers on Panama's decision to assert greater control over the

Balboa terminal, which had been operated under arrangements involving CK Hutchison. The Hong Kong conglomerate is one of the largest port operators in the world and has long maintained a presence at both ends of the Panama Canal through subsidiaries that manage major container terminals. While Panamanian officials have argued that the move is a regulatory or contractual matter, Chinese officials have framed it as an unfair action targeting a company linked to Chinese business interests. The situation has placed Panama in the middle of broader economic tensions between Beijing and international partners concerned about strategic infrastructure.

For shipping companies and cargo owners, the suspension could complicate logistics in the near term. COSCO is one of the world's largest container carriers, operating hundreds of vessels across global trade lanes. Diverting ships

away from Balboa may force operators to reroute cargo to other regional ports, potentially increasing transit times and costs.

The disruption comes at a time when global maritime supply chains are already navigating a range of pressures, including geopolitical disputes, shifting trade patterns, and ongoing adjustments in container capacity. Industry observers say the key question now is whether the dispute will escalate or lead to negotiations that could allow COSCO to resume operations at Balboa. If the standoff continues, it could highlight the growing role of politics in maritime commerce and the vulnerability of key trade hubs to diplomatic conflict.

For Panama, which relies heavily on maritime commerce tied to the canal, maintaining stable port operations will remain crucial as it navigates the fallout from the dispute.

Major Winter Storm Slams East Coast with Heavy Snow and Disruptions

A powerful winter storm swept across the eastern United States this past week, blanketing much of the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic in heavy snow and bringing widespread travel disruptions, power outages, and school closures. The storm developed along the Atlantic coast between February 22 and 24 and intensified into a major nor'easter. Blizzard warnings were issued for large population centers, including New York City and coastal New England, as strong winds and heavy snowfall created dangerous conditions.

Meteorologists described the system as one of the most significant winter storms in years, with snowfall totals exceeding two feet in many areas. Some communities reported more than three feet of snow, particularly in parts of southern New England. Winds approaching hurricane force in coastal areas produced whiteout conditions and drifting snow that made travel nearly impossible at times.

Transportation systems across the region were heavily affected. Thousands

of flights were canceled or delayed, and many schools and government offices closed as crews worked to clear roads and restore services. More than 600,000 customers lost power during the storm, mainly in the Northeast.

Snowfall varied widely across the region. Cities such as New York and Philadelphia received more than a foot of snow, while parts of New Jersey, Connecticut, and Rhode Island saw totals exceeding 30 inches. In some locations, the storm set records for snowfall, making it the heaviest winter storm in decades.

At least a dozen deaths were attributed to the storm, underscoring the dangers posed by extreme winter weather. Emergency crews responded to numerous accidents and weather-related incidents as residents were urged to remain indoors whenever possible.

By midweek, improving weather allowed cleanup efforts to accelerate, though large snowbanks and icy conditions continued to complicate travel. Forecasters warned

that additional winter storms could still develop before the season ends. The storm served as a reminder of the disruptive power of late-season winter weather across

the East Coast, where millions of residents faced hazardous conditions during one of the region's most intense snowstorms in recent memory.



European Union Eyes More Warships for Middle East Naval Patrols

European Union foreign ministers are set to discuss strengthening a small naval security mission in the Middle East during talks Monday, March 16th in Brussels, as escalating tensions around the Strait of Hormuz threaten global energy supplies and maritime trade. The discussions will focus on reinforcing the EU's Operation Aspides, which was established in 2024 to protect commercial shipping from attacks by Yemen's Houthi rebel movement. Diplomats say ministers are unlikely to approve any immediate expansion of the mission's mandate to include the Persian Gulf or the strategically vital strait, despite growing pressure from shipping and energy markets.

The naval mission currently operates primarily in the Red Sea and nearby

waterways where vessels have faced missile and drone strikes from the Houthi movement. Those attacks have disrupted maritime traffic between Europe and Asia and forced many vessels to divert around southern Africa. Under its existing structure, Operation Aspides maintains a modest but multinational naval presence. An Italian warship and a Greek vessel operate under the mission's direct command, while a French ship and another Italian naval unit can be called upon to support operations when needed.

The security situation has intensified following military strikes by the United States and Israel against Iranian targets beginning Feb. 28. In response, Iran has moved to restrict commercial traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, one of the

world's most critical energy chokepoints. Roughly one-fifth of global oil and liquefied natural gas shipments normally pass through the narrow passage linking the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and the wider Indian Ocean. The disruption has raised concerns about a sharp spike in energy prices and supply shortages in Europe and Asia.

Some European policymakers have begun considering whether Operation Aspides could play a broader role in ensuring freedom of navigation in the region. However, diplomats say the mission's current mandate and limited assets make such an expansion unlikely in the near term. Instead, Monday's meeting will focus on a proposal from EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas to encourage additional member states to contribute

naval vessels or logistical support.

"The conversation on Monday will be about trying to have more member states contribute further capacities," a senior EU official said, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations. Expanding the mission's fleet would allow the EU to provide greater protection for merchant vessels operating in the Red Sea and surrounding waters, where shipping companies remain wary of ongoing threats.

For European governments heavily dependent on imported energy and global trade routes, the discussions underscore a growing concern that maritime security challenges in the Middle East could have far-reaching economic consequences if the crisis deepens.

China Moves Closer to Nuclear-Powered Ships and Icebreakers

China's nuclear regulator has granted a major Shanghai shipbuilder approval to manufacture and install key components used in civilian nuclear systems, a development that could advance the country's efforts to deploy nuclear-powered maritime platforms, including experimental container ships and polar icebreakers. The authorization was issued by the National Nuclear Safety Administration to Jiangnan Shipyard (Group) Co., Ltd., allowing the yard to produce and install specific civil nuclear safety equipment tied to small floating reactor systems.

According to regulatory notices, Jiangnan Shipyard has been approved to manufacture and install a steel reactor containment vessel and to carry out installation work for control rod drive mechanisms, critical components used to regulate nuclear reactions inside a reactor core. The permissions stem from two applications submitted by the shipyard and are expected to remain valid for five years, providing a substantial window for the company to undertake nuclear-related construction projects.

Although the regulatory permits do not identify a specific vessel or program, maritime analysts say the approvals align closely with Jiangnan Shipyard's involvement in several proposed nuclear-powered maritime initiatives in China. The shipyard has been linked in recent years to research and design work involving small modular reactors intended for marine applications.

Chinese media outlets have also reported that the shipyard recently issued several procurement notices tied to the construction of a "low alloy steel containment vessel," a key structure designed to house a nuclear reactor and prevent the release of radioactive materials in the event of an accident. Industry observers say such components are commonly associated with compact reactor designs intended for use in floating power stations or advanced vessels that require long-endurance propulsion systems.

China has increasingly explored the development of maritime nuclear technologies as part of broader efforts to expand its presence in polar regions and to reduce emissions from long-distance shipping. Concepts discussed by Chinese research institutions and shipyards have included nuclear-powered container ships capable of operating on major trade routes without conventional fuel as well as nuclear icebreakers designed for Arctic operations.

While nuclear propulsion has long been used in military vessels such as submarines and aircraft carriers, civilian maritime applications remain rare due to high costs, regulatory hurdles, and safety concerns. Only a handful of nuclear-powered merchant vessels have ever been built, most notably the American cargo ship NS Savannah and the German research vessel Otto Hahn.

In recent years, however, interest in nuclear propulsion has revived as shipping companies and governments search for ways to reduce greenhouse

gas emissions while maintaining the long range required for global trade routes. Small modular reactors, often referred to as SMRs, are viewed as a potential pathway because of their compact size and enhanced safety features compared with traditional large nuclear reactors. If integrated successfully into commercial vessels or floating power systems, such technology could allow ships to operate for years without refueling while producing little or no direct carbon emissions.

For now, the regulatory approval granted to Jiangnan Shipyard represents an early but notable step toward enabling China's shipbuilding industry to manufacture the specialized equipment required for nuclear-powered maritime platforms. Industry analysts say the next phase will depend on whether China moves forward with full-scale vessel construction or demonstration projects that can bring these concepts from design to operational reality.

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American shipyards



American vessels

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DELIVERED BY JUST
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SHIPYARDS

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Participation Drops Sharply in Second 'Big Beautiful Gulf' Offshore Lease Sale

The latest offshore oil and gas lease auction conducted by the U.S. Bureau of Ocean Energy Management generated \$46.98 million in high bids Wednesday, marking a significant drop in industry participation compared with the program's inaugural sale late last year. Lease Sale "Big Beautiful Gulf 2," commonly referred to as BBG2, drew 38 bids from 13 companies covering 25 offshore blocks across approximately 141,000 acres in federal waters of the Gulf of America.

While several major oil companies participated in the auction, the results fell far short of the program's first lease offering in December 2025. The initial sale, known as BBG1, generated \$279.4 million in high bids and drew significantly broader industry interest. During that inaugural auction, 30 companies submitted a total of 219 bids covering 181 offshore blocks. Those bids collectively totaled \$371.9 million, highlighting the much stronger

competition seen in the early phase of the federal leasing program.

Industry analysts say the drop in participation reflects a combination of market caution, shifting energy prices, and companies carefully evaluating exploration risks before committing to new offshore investments. The Gulf region remains one of the most productive offshore oil provinces in the world, accounting for roughly 15 percent of total U.S. crude oil production. However, offshore development projects require billions of dollars in long-term investment and can take years to reach production.

As a result, companies often approach lease sales selectively, focusing on areas where existing infrastructure or geological data improves the chances of a profitable discovery. The bidders in Wednesday's sale included a mix of major international energy companies and smaller independent Gulf operators.

Among those submitting bids were Chevron U.S.A., BP Exploration & Production, Shell Offshore, Talos Energy, Beacon Offshore Energy, Houston Energy, and Arena Energy, along with several privately held exploration firms.

Officials with BOEM noted that the results announced Wednesday represent preliminary high bids and remain subject to agency review. During that process, the agency evaluates bids to ensure they meet fair market value standards before formally awarding the leases. Once finalized, the leases grant companies the right to explore for oil and natural gas resources within the designated offshore blocks, typically for an initial exploration period of several years.

The federal government collects revenue from offshore leasing through bonus bids, rental payments, and production royalties once energy development begins. Offshore lease sales have long

been a major source of federal revenue while supporting thousands of jobs tied to drilling operations, offshore supply vessels, shipyards, and coastal service industries along the Gulf Coast. Despite the smaller number of bids in the latest auction, BOEM officials said the sale still demonstrates continued interest in offshore exploration within the region.

Energy analysts say future participation in upcoming lease sales will likely depend on global oil prices, geopolitical tensions affecting energy markets, and how companies prioritize long-term exploration spending in an increasingly uncertain energy landscape. For now, the second "Big Beautiful Gulf" sale underscores a more cautious approach from industry players as they weigh opportunities in one of America's most important offshore energy regions.

Maritime Networks Strained as Hormuz Diversions Surge 360%

The effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz is sending shockwaves through global container supply chains, forcing ocean carriers to reroute cargo at unprecedented levels and raising new concerns about delays, rising freight rates, and potential shortages across multiple industries. New data released by supply chain analytics firm Project44 shows container shipment diversions have surged more than 360 percent since the waterway was declared effectively closed following the escalation of hostilities between the United States, Israel, and Iran in late February.

Under normal conditions, an average of about 218 container shipments per day would be diverted in the region due to routine congestion, weather disruptions, or operational issues. Since the conflict intensified, however, that number has jumped dramatically to roughly 1,010 daily diversions as shipping companies scramble to keep vessels out of what has

become one of the world's most dangerous maritime chokepoints. The disruption reached its peak on March 5, when Project44 recorded 2,363 shipment diversions in a single day, the highest level of disruption observed in the region since the firm began tracking the data.

The Strait of Hormuz, a narrow channel between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, is one of the most strategically vital maritime routes in the world. Roughly 20 percent of global oil shipments pass through the corridor, along with large volumes of containerized cargo serving major Gulf ports in the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, and Bahrain.

With military tensions escalating and insurers raising war-risk premiums, many container lines are now avoiding the region altogether. Ships that would normally call at Gulf ports are being rerouted to alternative hubs such as Salalah in Oman

or Jebel Ali in the United Arab Emirates, where cargo is transferred to smaller feeder vessels or redirected through other regional networks.

In some cases, carriers are bypassing the Persian Gulf entirely and shifting cargo to ports on the Red Sea or the Mediterranean, forcing shippers to rely on longer overland routes to reach their final destinations. The diversions are adding significant transit time and costs to global supply chains that were only recently beginning to stabilize after years of pandemic-era disruptions and congestion at major ports.

Logistics experts warn the situation could worsen if the closure continues for an extended period. Container vessels operate on tightly coordinated schedules across multiple ports, and sudden route changes can ripple through the entire system, causing delays far beyond the Middle East. "Shipping networks are built

around predictability," said one industry analyst. "When a major chokepoint like Hormuz becomes inaccessible, the effects cascade quickly through the global supply chain." The crisis also highlights the growing vulnerability of international trade to geopolitical flashpoints along critical maritime routes. In recent years, disruptions in the Suez Canal, Red Sea shipping lanes, and the Panama Canal have already strained shipping capacity and driven up freight costs.

If the Strait of Hormuz remains closed or highly restricted, analysts warn that global shipping markets could face another prolonged period of instability — with higher prices and longer delivery times likely to follow. For now, shipping companies are continuing to adjust routes and schedules daily, hoping the situation stabilizes before the disruption spreads even further across the world's interconnected maritime trade networks.

Trump Administration Sues California Over Vehicle Emissions Standards

The Trump administration escalated its long-running dispute with California over vehicle emissions Thursday, filing a lawsuit against state regulators in an effort to block rules aimed at reducing pollution from cars and accelerating the shift toward electric vehicles. Federal officials argue that California's regulations exceed the state's legal authority and impose costly mandates on automakers and consumers. The lawsuit targets standards developed by the California Air Resources Board, which has led national efforts to reduce vehicle emissions and address climate-related pollution.

President Donald Trump has repeatedly challenged California's aggressive environmental policies. Last summer, his administration blocked the state's plan to prohibit the sale of new gasoline-powered vehicles by 2035, a landmark rule designed to speed the transition to electric transportation.

The latest legal action continues a

broader conflict between federal regulators and California officials over the state's ability to set emissions standards that exceed federal requirements. California leaders quickly condemned the lawsuit. A spokesperson for the office of Gavin Newsom said the federal government's legal challenge comes at a time when rising gasoline prices are already putting pressure on consumers.

"Gas prices are soaring nationwide because of Trump's reckless choices, and now he's attacking the Golden State for trying to give Californians more freedom and cheaper options," Newsom spokesperson Anthony Martinez said in a statement.

According to the American Automobile Association, the average price of gasoline in California reached \$5.37 per gallon on Thursday. That compares with a national average of \$3.60 per gallon. Fuel prices have risen sharply in recent days amid global tensions and conflict

involving Iran. Analysts say the surge reflects broader market disruptions after the United States and Israel launched military strikes against Iranian targets earlier this month.

Statewide gasoline prices have increased roughly 56 cents per gallon over the past week in California, while the national average has climbed about 35 cents per gallon. Overall, prices have risen roughly 20 percent since the conflict began. Some policy experts say the timing of the federal lawsuit could intensify the political debate over energy costs and environmental regulation.

"It's ironic that they're doing this just at the time when people are most worried about gas prices," said Dan Farber, faculty director of the Center for Law, Energy, and the Environment at the University of California, Berkeley School of Law. California has long held unique authority under federal law to pursue stricter vehicle emissions standards than

those required nationwide. The authority comes through a waiver granted by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, allowing the state to address its persistent air pollution challenges.

During Trump's first presidency, that waiver was revoked, triggering legal battles between state and federal regulators. The waiver was later reinstated in 2022 under President Joe Biden. In the current lawsuit, federal officials argue that California cannot enforce even its less stringent emissions standards without explicit federal approval.

"Oppressive, expensive electric vehicle mandates drive up costs for American consumers and violate federal law," Attorney General Pam Bondi said in a statement announcing the legal challenge. The case is expected to set the stage for another high-stakes court battle over environmental regulation, federal authority, and the future direction of U.S. climate and transportation policy.



CONGRATULATIONS TAYLOR REHMET

TEXAS STATE SENATOR-ELECT!

In a stunning political upset, Taylor Rehmet, president of a Fort Worth machinists local, has secured a decisive victory in the recent election for an open state senate seat. The win marks a historic shift in a district that had not elected a Democrat since 1979, breaking more than four decades of Republican dominance.

Rehmet, long known for his work organizing machinists and advocating for labor rights, ran a campaign centered on pro-union messaging and economic fairness, striking a chord with voters in a district with a strong industrial and working-class base. His message emphasized strengthening worker protections, improving wages, and supporting local businesses, themes that resonated across traditional political lines. "Every voter I met wanted someone who understands the day-to-day challenges of working families," Rehmet said during his victory speech. "I am proud to bring the voice of our community, our unions, and our workers to the state senate."

Political analysts describe the win as a remarkable example of labor-focused grassroots organizing translating into electoral success. While the district has historically leaned Republican, recent demographic shifts, coupled with economic concerns, created an opening for Rehmet's message to gain traction. Campaign strategists note that Rehmet's visibility as the president of a local machinists union gave him a unique advantage. His role in negotiating contracts, advocating for

safe working conditions, and addressing workforce concerns allowed him to establish trust among constituents who felt their priorities were often ignored by previous representatives.

Rehmet's campaign also leveraged modern communication strategies, including a strong presence on social media, targeted outreach to union members, and engagement with younger voters in Fort Worth. This blend of traditional union networks and contemporary political outreach helped broaden his appeal across age groups and communities.

The Republican candidate, while well-funded and experienced, struggled to counter the personal connection Rehmet had with voters in the industrial heart of the district. Analysts say that Rehmet's ability to tie local labor issues to state-level policymaking was a key factor in persuading independent and swing voters.

Observers suggest that this victory may signal changing political dynamics in traditionally Republican areas, especially where working-class issues and union advocacy are central to voters' concerns. For now, Rehmet's focus will be on delivering results that reflect his campaign promises, from labor protections to economic development initiatives. With a commanding win in a historically Republican stronghold, Taylor Rehmet has not only made history but also underscored the enduring influence of labor leadership in local and state politics.

The Honorable Andy Harris
Chair
Subcommittee on Agriculture
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sanford Bishop
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Hoeven
Chair
Subcommittee on Agriculture
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Harris, Chair Hoeven, Ranking Member Bishop, and Ranking Member Shaheen:

Each year our nation's international food aid programs, including Food for Peace Title II, Food for Progress, and McGovern-Dole International Food for Education, help reach millions of vulnerable people around the world, while also putting America First. These Buy American programs have enjoyed significant bipartisan support for over 70 years. With the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) ramping up its Food for Peace activities, we recommend returning to FY24/FY25 funding levels. As such, we, the undersigned organizations, respectfully request Congress continue to fully support these programs and **include \$1,619,107,000 for Food for Peace and \$240,000,000 for McGovern-Dole in the fiscal year 2027 agriculture appropriations bill.**

The use of American grown commodities as food aid has been a cornerstone of Food for Peace, Food for Progress, and McGovern-Dole for decades. Through a joint public-private partnership, American farmers, mariners, port workers, private voluntary organizations (PVOs), and the U.S. government have developed the strongest frontline response to urgent global food insecurity. Food aid is a tangible source of hope to those in need, and American stakeholders take great pride in their support for the world's most vulnerable people through these programs. The Food for Peace program purchases, on average, more than a million tons of American-grown commodities from dozens of states each year, utilizes this country's transportation and shipping industries, and supports the American economy while simultaneously responding to hunger emergencies around the world. Throughout their history, food assistance programs have supported and earned American allies and paved the way for greater commercial and trade opportunities across the world.

Food for Peace, Food for Progress, and McGovern-Dole not only benefit their recipients, but also U.S. economic and national security interests. Food aid is made available through these programs in bags bearing the U.S. flag and/or marked "from the American people." U.S. contributions to global food security support U.S. strength abroad, especially when confronting programs like China's Road and Belt Initiative (and its more than \$1 trillion investment) and those of other global competitors eager to establish spheres of influence. And, ultimately, these kinds of humanitarian assistance programs help create a firm foundation for vulnerable communities to grow and prosper, which is why many former food aid recipient countries are now among the most important U.S. trading partners.

We believe that these U.S. international food aid programs are among the world's most critical humanitarian assistance programs, save countless lives, bolster our nation's global security, and help millions in need around the world. We ask that you continue to allow these Buy American, America First programs to reinforce our nation's standing as a global leader in food security by **funding Food for Peace and McGovern-Dole at their FY24/FY25 levels of \$1,619,107,000 and \$240,000,000, respectively.** America's farmers, millers, mariners, and on the ground implementers are ready to continue carrying out the necessary and vital work accomplished in the Food for Peace, Food for Progress, and McGovern-Dole programs.

Thank you,

- ACDI/VOCA
- AFL-CIO Maritime Trades Department
- AFL-CIO Transportation Trades Department
- Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute
- Alliance to End Hunger
- American Maritime Congress
- American Maritime Officers
- American Maritime Officers Service
- American Soybean Association
- APL
- Apostleship of the Sea of the United States of America
- Apostleship of the Sea/Stella Maris - Diocese of Beaumont
- Association of Genuine Alaska Pollock Producers
- BKA Logistics
- Breedlove Foods, Inc.
- California Association of Wheat Growers
- Chicago Port Logistics
- Clarksons EAST LLC
- Colorado Association of Wheat Growers
- Didion Milling, Inc.
- DRY BULK AMERICA LLC
- dsm-firmenich na
- Edesia Nutrition
- Fettig & Donalty, Inc.
- Global Communities
- Global Food & Nutrition
- Grain Craft LLC
- Grain Millers - Agricor
- Heartland Goodwill Enterprises
- HelpAge USA

- Hopkinsville Milling Company
- Idaho Grain Producers Association
- Idaho Wheat Commission
- ILWU Washington Area District Council
- Improving Economies for Stronger Communities
- Inland Cape Fine Grind LLC
- Inlandboatmen's Union of the Pacific
- International Dairy Foods Association
- International Organization of Masters, Mates & Pilots
- Kansas Association of Wheat Growers
- Kansas Farmers Union
- Kansas Sorghum Producers
- Kendall Packaging Corporation
- Liberty Maritime Corporation
- Lone Star Integrated Distribution
- Malnutrition Advocacy Fund
- Mana Nutrition
- Marine Engineers' Beneficial Association
- Marine Firemen's Union
- Maritime Institute for Research and Industrial Development (MIRAID)
- Mercy Corps
- Midwest Dry Bean Coalition
- Minnesota Association of Wheat Growers
- Muller Shipping Corporation
- National Association of Waterfront Employers
- National Association of Wheat Growers
- National Cooperative Business Association (NCBA CLUSA)
- National Corn Growers Association
- National Council of Farmer Cooperatives

- National Milk Producers Federation
- National Shipping of America, LLC.
- National Sorghum Producers
- Navy League of the United States
- Nebraska Dry Bean Commission
- Nebraska Dry Pea and Lentil Commission
- Nebraska Wheat Board
- Nebraska Wheat Growers Association
- North American Millers' Association
- North Dakota Farmers Union
- North Dakota Grain Growers Association
- North Dakota Wheat Commission
- Northeast Chartering Group
- Oklahoma Sorghum Growers
- Oklahoma Wheat Commission
- Oklahoma Wheat Growers Association
- Oregon Wheat Growers League
- Pacific Northwest Waterways Association
- Patriot Maritime
- Port Arthur International Seamen's Center, Inc
- Port of Kalama
- Port of Lake Charles
- Port of New Orleans
- Port of Vancouver USA
- Potomac Maritime, LLC
- Reliance Bulk Carriers
- REPCO
- Rocky Mountain Bean Dealers Association
- Sailors' Union of the Pacific
- Save the Children
- School-to-School International
- Schuyler Line Navigation Company
- Seafarers International Union
- Sealift INC.
- SeaTac Packaging
- SEMO Milling LLC
- South Dakota Wheat Growers Association
- Southern Gulf Packaging & Logistics
- Texas Grain Sorghum Association
- Texas Wheat Producers Association
- Transportation Institute
- Transylvania Vocational Services, inc.
- U.S. Dairy Export Council
- U.S. Wheat Associates
- UNISHIPPING SAS
- US Dry Bean Council

- US Ocean
- USA Pulses
- USA Pulses Trade Association
- USA Rice
- Washington Association of Wheat Growers
- WaterAid America
- Winrock International
- Wisconsin & Southern Railroad
- World Food Program USA
- World Vision
- Wyoming Wheat Growers Association



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SUP PRESIDENT'S REPORT

PERSIAN GULF

On February 28, the United States and Israel launched a coordinated joint attack in Iran. Codenamed Operation Epic Fury by the United States. It targeted Iranian officials, military commanders, and Iranian facilities. The attacked included the assassination of the Supreme Leader of Iran.

One SUP crewed vessel was alongside the pier in Dubai during Iranian counter missile strikes. APL has informed the Union that the ship was instructed to immediately proceed to shelter and that the crew is safe and restricted to ship. The ship's Automatic Identification System (AIS) has been turned off.

On March 2nd the U.S. Flag tanker *Stena Imperative* was struck by two projectiles while in a Bahrain shipyard. The ship is part of the Tanker Security Program and managed by Crowley. There was one shipyard worker killed and two others injured. The strikes ignited a fire that was quickly extinguished and the vessel remains secure in the port. All mariners were reported safe and evacuated the ship.

On March 3rd, SUP and six other Maritime Unions issued the following statement:

In addition, the seven seagoing maritime unions and affected companies are meeting weekly to discuss any updates, safety measures taken, and changes to current policies.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 3, 2026

Maritime Unions Issue Joint Statement Following Attack on U.S.-Flag Vessel Amid Rising Gulf Tension

Washington, D.C. – The American Maritime Officers (AMO), the American Radio Association (ARA), the Marine Engineers' Beneficial Association (MEBA), the Marine Fireman's Union (MFOU), the International Organization of Masters, Mates and Pilots (MM&P), the Seafarers International Union (SIU), and the Sailors Union of the Pacific (SUP), released the following statement in response to escalating disruptions to U.S.-flag vessel operations in the Persian Gulf:

"For more than 250 years, the United States Merchant Marine has successfully delivered the cargoes essential to our nation's economy, security, and global trade. Today, American mariners continue that proud tradition while operating in increasingly dangerous regions around the world."

"Our unions are working closely with vessel management, U.S. military leaders, and the federal government to safeguard American mariners operating in the Persian Gulf and throughout the Middle East. We remain committed to continued coordination with all stakeholders until the safety and security of U.S.-flag vessels and their civilian crews can be fully assured."

"American mariners deserve the strongest possible protection as they carry out missions vital to our nation's economic and strategic interests. We will continue to advocate for robust measures that ensure the safety of American crews and vessels during this period of heightened risk."

###

ANDREW FURUSETH SCHOOL OF SEAMANSHIP

Berit Eriksson, our longtime Training Representative, will be retiring at the end of March. We would like to congratulate Berit on an outstanding 18 years of dedicated service with the AFSS. As most of us know, Coast Guard regulations are constantly changing, and there has been no one better at keeping up with those changes than Berit. Her knowledge, professionalism, and commitment to helping our members stay compliant and well-trained have been invaluable to the organization. Berit's work behind the scenes has played a critical role in supporting the safety and success of our membership. She will be greatly missed, and we thank her for the many years she has devoted to AFSS. We wish Berit all the best in her well-deserved retirement.

Our new Training Rep is Liz Zeiger, Liz has sailed as an AB and Bosun with the SUP on Patriot, APL, and Matson ships. She has been training with Berit this past month to ensure a seamless operation. Her contact information is below.

Cell phone: (949) 257 2951, Email: Liz@marinerbenefits.org

Mail receipts to: PO BOX 2399, Mission Viejo, CA, 92690

CALIFORNIA FEDERATION OF LABOR UNIONS

Executive Secretary Treasurer Lorena Gonzalez called on affiliate Unions to attend the March 16, 2026 Pre-Primary Cope Convention for the California Federation of Labor Unions in Sacramento, CA. Mr. Chairman, I nominate SUP Vice President Sam Worth and myself to attend on behalf of the SUP.

AMERICAN PRESIDENT LINES

High Risk Waters Bonus: With the ongoing risks in the Persian Gulf the Union and APL signed a Letter of Understanding (LOU) that covers the Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman designating them as High Risk Waters. Any ship in the high risk waters reads as follows "The company will pay, in addition to all other forms of compensation, a Bonus equivalent to 100% of working base wages (Monthly Working Base divided by 30), to each member aboard a Company vessel for each calendar day during the period when the vessel is transiting the aforementioned high risk waters. A day shall be reckoned midnight to midnight." The LOU is effective February 28, 2026 through

March 31, 2026 and will remain in full force and effect until terminated by either Party with 24 hours' notice, based on a reduced threat to commercial shipping in specified areas prescribed herein as communicated by CENTCOM or comparable U.S. government authorities.

SUP MEMBER DETAINED: The APL President Bush was detained in Yokohama, Japan, after the Japanese Coast Guard found a type of paraphernalia/smoking device containing THC in an AB's room. This appeared to be a targeted incident where, after the member returned from shore leave, the Coast Guard boarded the ship and searched this member's room specifically. The ship has since left Yokohama, and the SUP member is still being detained. The U.S. Embassy has been notified of the detention, a local attorney has been hired to represent the member, and his family has been notified. We will continue to monitor the situation along with the company and do anything we can to assist our member getting home.

After a Zoom meeting with myself, VP Sam Worth, and our Branch Agents, it appears this is not the first time the Japanese Coast Guard has searched a member's room after they returned from shore leave. I can't stress enough how important it is not to bring any illegal narcotics, paraphernalia, or other illegal contraband aboard. Even items that may be legal in certain states in the U.S. can carry serious consequences in foreign countries.

CMA CGM Phoenix: On March 4, I was notified by Master, Mates, and Pilots Union (MM&P) President Don Josenberg that they had won their arbitration case against APL regarding jurisdiction on the *CMA CGM Phoenix*. The arbitrator ruled that APL violated the collectively bargained agreement (CBA) when it used the AMO Union to crew the licensed deck officer positions aboard the vessel. The arbitrator remitted the issue of remedy to the parties for 30 days to agree on an appropriate resolution.

I want to congratulate President Don Josenberg, Secretary-Treasurer Lars Turner, and the entire membership of MM&P for standing up to APL and protecting what is rightfully theirs. These cases do not come without risk and are not easy to win.

As a reminder to members, the SUP and MFOU filed a similar grievance in August 2025 against APL for the crewing of the *CMA CGM Phoenix* with non-SUP and MFOU unlicensed deck and engine personnel. When the unions and APL could not reach an agreement on the crewing of the ship, we proceeded with arbitration as provided in the grievance resolution procedure under Section 10(b) of the Agreement. Our arbitration hearing date is currently scheduled for June 2026. It is important to note that MM&P's win does not resolve our grievance but is no doubt a significant development that cannot be ignored. We will work with our attorneys to determine the next steps before our case is heard.

JONES ACT WAIVER

As the Trump administration considers temporarily waiving the Merchant Marine Act of 1920, commonly known as the Jones Act, to address surging fuel prices during the Middle East conflict, SUP and other Unions are pushing back reminding decision makers in Washington that the move would do little or nothing to lower prices at the pump.

continued on next page



Crew aboard the *President Johnson* in Qingdow, China. Front row- Bosun Rico Enclair Jr., Johnny Rivera, second row- Steve Fuentes, Ronald Brito, back row- Anthony Wylie, Kyle Swainbank

SUP President's Report

Continued from previous page

According to people familiar with the matter, the administration is evaluating a 30-day Jones Act Waiver that would allow foreign-flagged vessels to transport oil, gasoline, diesel, liquefied natural gas, and fertilizer between U.S. ports. The potential exemption would be issued under Section 501(a) of the law, which permits the government to allow foreign vessels to carry domestic cargo when it is deemed "necessary in the interest of national defense to address an immediate adverse effect on military operations."

On March 12, SUP along with five other Maritime Unions and the Transportation Trades Department sent the below letter to President Donald Trump.



March 12, 2026

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump:

On behalf of the undersigned American maritime labor unions, we write to express our strong opposition to any administrative waivers granted under the Jones Act in response to rising energy price concerns.

As you know, Jones Act waivers are granted only in rare, exceptional circumstances, typically on national security grounds where U.S.-flag vessel capacity is unavailable. Should concerns exist regarding tanker capacity, Congress has already addressed this through the Tanker Security Program, which ensures the availability of U.S.-flag vessels crewed by American mariners to move critical energy supplies when needed. Domestic tanker rates remain stable under long-term charters, while international shipping markets are highly volatile, with foreign-flag tanker rates often exceeding Jones Act rates due to global instability, including disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz. Waiving the Jones Act would do nothing to reduce gasoline prices. In fact, the primary driver of gasoline prices is the cost of crude oil, not domestic shipping costs. Several studies have shown the impact of domestic shipping on nationwide fuel prices is negligible, and any marginal savings would be unlikely to reach consumers. A Jones Act waiver would instead create opportunities for foreign-flag operators that avoid paying U.S. taxes, rely heavily on low-wage labor, and operate under regulatory regimes that circumvent international labor and vessel safety standards in direct conflict of America's national security and economic interests.

At a time when the Administration is working to strengthen our nation's shipyards and expand the international U.S.-flag fleet under the recently unveiled Maritime Action Plan (MAP), a Jones Act waiver would undermine these core policy objectives. The Jones Act is foundational to maintaining a strong merchant marine, sustaining maritime employment, supporting shipbuilding capacity, and preserving the domestic industrial base essential to national security. Waiving this law when U.S. vessels are available would outsource American jobs and weaken the long-term resilience of the maritime industrial base. While we genuinely share the collective goal of lowering energy costs for consumers, such waivers would do little to achieve that outcome while harming American workers and domestic industrial capacity.

Thank you for your consideration of our views. We stand ready to work with you to identify meaningful solutions to rising energy prices that protect American workers and strengthen our maritime and industrial base.

Sincerely,

Willie Barrere, American Maritime Officers
Kelly Anderson, President, American Radio Association
Don Josberger, President, International Organization of Masters, Mates and Pilots
Anthony Poplawski, President, Marine Firemen's Union
Adam Vokac, President, Marine Engineers' Beneficial Association
Matt Henning, President, Sailors' Union of the Pacific
Greg Regan, President, Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO (TTD)

PATRIOT

As reported last month the union was notified that MSC anticipates exercising option period four with Patriot Contract Services. As of April 1, 2026 there will be only four MSC Watson Class vessels; *USNS Sisler*, *USNS Dahl*, *USNS Watkins*, and *USNS Red Cloud*. The *George Watson*, *Cornelius H Charlton*, *William A Soderman* have been transferred to MARAD and *Ralph E Pomeroy* has an expected transfer date of April 1, 2026.

In accordance with the contract between the SIU Pacific District and PCS, there shall be a two (2.0) percent increase in Total Labor Cost on April 1, 2026. The official wage scale will be sent to all SUP Branches and posted in next month's *West Coast Sailors*.

HOLIDAYS

Harry Bridges' Memorial Day in Honolulu: The Honolulu Hall will be closed on Monday, March 30, 2026, in observance of Harry Bridges' Memorial Day, which is an ILWU Local 42 holiday.

Cesar Chavez' Birthday: The San Francisco, Seattle, and Wilmington Halls will be closed on Monday, March 31st, 2026, in observance of Cesar Chavez Birthday, which is a longshore holiday under the ILWU Master Agreement. It is therefore recognized SUP holiday aboard APL and Matson vessels in West Coast ports; it is not a holiday at sea.

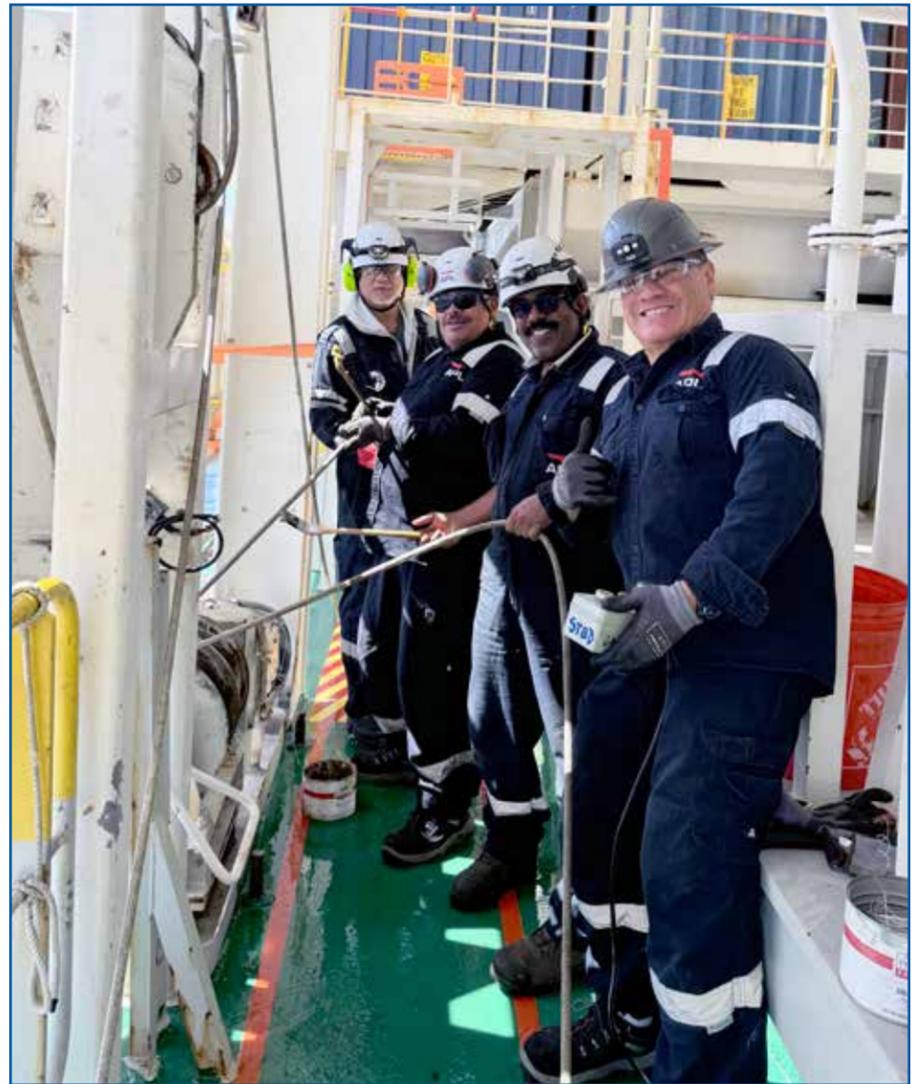
ACTION TAKEN

M/S to approve Matt Henning and Sam Worth as delegates to the California Federation of Labor Unions Pre-Primary Convention. (Dulay, several). Carried Unanimously.

M/S to approve LOU between SUP and APL on High Risk Waters Bonus. (Hermosillo, several). Carried Unanimously.

M/S to concur with the balance of the President's Report. (Henderson, several). Carried Unanimously.

Matt Henning



Crew aboard the *APL President Grant* replacing the gangway wire. From front to back: Bosun Mike Higa, Manjula Kondapperuma, Juan Gonzalez, and Edward Hervias.

Honoring Saint Patrick: A Global Celebration of Irish Roots



Green-dyed rivers, marching bagpipes and crowded pubs will once again mark St. Patrick's Day on March 17, as cities across the United States and around the world celebrate Irish heritage and culture. The holiday honors Saint Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, who is credited with bringing Christianity to the island in the fifth century. Though historians debate some of the legends surrounding his life, including the famous tale of driving snakes from Ireland, Patrick remains a powerful symbol of Irish identity and resilience.

What began as a religious feast day in Ireland has evolved into a global celebration of Irish culture. In the United States, where millions claim Irish ancestry, St. Patrick's Day has become both a tribute to immigrant roots and a broader festival of community spirit.

Among the most famous celebrations is the parade in New York City, which dates back to 1762 and is considered the largest in the world. Thousands of marchers, including firefighters, police officers, union members and school bands, proceed up Fifth Avenue each year, watched by crowds clad in green. In the Midwest, Chicago continues its long-standing tradition of dyeing the Chicago River a vivid emerald hue, a spectacle that draws visitors from across the country. Meanwhile, historic celebrations in Boston and Savannah reflect deep Irish-American roots in those communities.

Traditional symbols of the holiday include the shamrock, which Patrick is said to have used to explain the Christian Holy Trinity, and the wearing of green, a color long associated with Ireland's landscape and nationalist movements. For many, the day blends solemn observance with festive cheer. Church services are held in the morning, followed by music, dancing and gatherings at local pubs. Irish folk songs and contemporary Celtic rock alike fill the air. While commercialism has expanded the holiday's reach, organizers and historians alike emphasize its deeper meaning: a recognition of Ireland's cultural contributions and the enduring story of immigration and community in America.

EU Unveils Sweeping Maritime and Ports Strategy to Strengthen Industry

The European Commission on Wednesday, March 4th unveiled sweeping new strategies designed to strengthen Europe's maritime industrial base and modernize its port infrastructure, part of a broader effort to boost economic competitiveness, enhance security, and accelerate the shipping sector's transition toward cleaner energy.

The twin initiatives, the EU Industrial Maritime Strategy and the EU Ports Strategy, aim to support key segments of Europe's waterborne economy, including shipbuilding, commercial shipping, and port operations. Officials in Brussels said the plans are intended to reinforce Europe's leadership in high-end shipbuilding and maritime services while responding to rising geopolitical tensions, security threats, and mounting pressure to decarbonize global shipping.

"Europe's maritime manufacturing and shipping industries are fundamental to our sovereignty," said Stéphane Séjourné, the Commission's Executive Vice-President for Prosperity and Industrial

Strategy. "They are key enablers of our strategic autonomy, security, and resilience. Our strategy will not only increase manufacturing capacities in Europe but also support 'Made in EU' leadership for specific vessel segments, technologies and innovation."

Europe has long been a global leader in specialized shipbuilding, producing cruise ships, offshore vessels, ferries, and advanced naval platforms. However, European officials say the region faces growing competition from major Asian shipbuilding nations, particularly China and South Korea, which dominate the construction of large commercial vessels such as container ships and tankers.

Under the new strategy, the Commission plans to expand investment in maritime innovation, advanced ship design, and green propulsion technologies. The initiative will support development of vessels powered by low-emission fuels such as hydrogen, ammonia, and methanol, while also promoting digitalization and automation in shipyards and port

operations.

The accompanying EU Ports Strategy focuses on strengthening port infrastructure across the bloc and ensuring that Europe's ports remain competitive in an increasingly complex global trade environment. Ports are viewed not only as trade gateways but also as strategic assets for energy security, military mobility, and supply chain resilience.

Officials say the strategy will prioritize upgrades to port infrastructure, including expanded container capacity, improved rail and inland transport links, and new facilities to handle alternative marine fuels needed for cleaner ships.

Security concerns are also central to the plan. European ports have faced rising pressure to improve protection against cyberattacks, smuggling networks, and potential disruptions linked to geopolitical conflicts. The strategy calls for closer coordination among member states to strengthen security standards and intelligence sharing across the maritime sector.

At the same time, the Commission em-

phasized that ports will play a crucial role in meeting the European Union's climate goals. The strategy includes measures to expand shore power systems, allowing ships to plug into electricity while docked rather than running diesel engines, reducing emissions in densely populated coastal areas.

The maritime sector is a cornerstone of Europe's economy. Roughly 75 percent of the European Union's external trade moves by sea, and millions of jobs across shipyards, logistics companies, ports, and maritime services depend on the industry. By investing in new technology and modern infrastructure, European leaders hope the strategy will help the region maintain its influence in global shipping while supporting the transition toward greener maritime transport. The proposals now move forward for consultation with member states and industry stakeholders, marking the beginning of what European officials say will be a long-term effort to secure the future of the continent's maritime economy.

Orcas and Food Competition Drive Changes in South Africa's Shark Hotspots

Beach communities along South Africa's southern coastline are facing renewed concern as shark encounters, some of them fatal, have increased in recent years. The rise in activity has been particularly noticeable in the country's Eastern and Western Cape provinces, where popular tourist destinations such as Plettenberg

Bay have recorded several high-profile incidents. Marine researchers say the trend may be linked to shifting behavior among the region's apex predators, especially the Great white shark. Once commonly seen in large numbers along the Western Cape coastline, great white sightings have declined in some traditional hotspots while

increasing farther east.

Scientists believe one possible driver behind this shift is the presence of Orca, also known as killer whales. In recent years, marine biologists have documented orcas preying on great white sharks off the South African coast, an unusual predator-prey relationship that has gained global attention. Researchers studying shark movements report that great whites often abandon areas shortly after orcas appear. The killer whales have demonstrated a highly specialized hunting strategy, targeting the sharks and removing their nutrient-rich livers. Several shark carcasses discovered along the coast in recent years have shown signs consistent with these attacks. As a result, many great white sharks appear to be shifting their range eastward along the coast in search of safer feeding grounds. That movement has brought them closer to beaches that are heavily used by swimmers, surfers, and divers.

The waters near Plettenberg Bay, along with parts of the Eastern Cape, are rich in marine life, including fish and seal populations that attract large predators. With sharks expanding their hunting territory, the likelihood of encounters with humans has increased.

Another factor possibly contributing to the trend is growing competition for food. Changes in ocean conditions, fishing pressure, and shifting prey populations may be forcing sharks to travel greater distances in search of meals. When these predators move into new coastal zones, they can overlap with busy recreational areas.

Local authorities have responded by expanding monitoring and safety programs along several beaches. Early warning systems, aerial patrols, and shark-spotting teams are now used in some communities to track shark movements and alert beachgoers when animals are nearby. Experts emphasize that shark attacks remain extremely rare despite the

heightened attention. Millions of people swim in South African waters each year without incident, and scientists stress that sharks are a vital part of maintaining healthy ocean ecosystems.

Still, the recent rise in encounters highlights how changes among top predators can ripple through marine environments. As orcas alter the balance of the ocean food chain, the movement of great white sharks may continue to reshape where, and how often, humans cross paths with one of the sea's most powerful hunters.

Operation Epic Fury: U.S. and Israel Launch Major Strike Campaign Against Iran

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energy shipping routes. U.S. naval forces were placed on heightened alert as well. Carrier strike groups and guided-missile destroyers moved to protect commercial shipping lanes and to provide additional missile defense for regional bases and allied infrastructure.

The maritime security situation remains fluid. U.S. naval forces, including units from the United States Navy, have increased patrols in the Gulf region to deter attacks and protect international shipping. However, officials have warned that the Navy cannot guarantee escorts for every merchant vessel attempting to transit the strait, leaving shipowners to make difficult decisions about risk.

Iranian officials have stated publicly that they do not intend to formally close

the Strait of Hormuz, though they maintain that the option remains available as a strategic response to military pressure. Even without a formal closure, however, the presence of mines, missile threats, and drone attacks has effectively turned the area into a war-risk zone for commercial shipping.

Early in the campaign, Donald Trump said the operation was expected to last a few weeks, though he also emphasized that U.S. forces could continue longer if necessary. Later briefings from the White House suggested a 4-6 week window for achieving the main military objectives. However, officials have also said the timeline depends on whether the military goals are achieved, not on a fixed calendar date.

Action Plan Seeks to Rebuild America's Merchant Marine

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The action plan also highlights the importance of the Merchant Marine Act of 1920 (Jones Act), which requires vessels transporting goods between U.S. ports to be built in the United States, owned by American companies, and crewed by U.S. citizens. The administration reaffirmed its support for the law, describing it as a cornerstone of domestic maritime policy and a key tool in maintaining shipbuilding capacity.

In addition to domestic shipping, the MAP calls for expanding the country's presence in global maritime trade and strengthening cooperation with allied nations on shipping security and supply

chain resilience. Industry analysts say the plan's ultimate impact will depend on whether Congress provides the funding and legislative changes needed to implement its recommendations. If fully realized, supporters argue the initiative could mark a turning point for an industry that has struggled with declining fleet numbers, aging infrastructure, and growing international competition.

For now, the administration's maritime blueprint signals a renewed federal focus on restoring America's maritime capabilities, an effort officials say is critical for both economic strength and national security in an increasingly competitive global shipping landscape.



Dispatcher's Report Headquarters — January 2026

Deck	
Bosun	2
Carpenter	0
MM	1
AB	11
OS.....	1
Standby S.F.....	10
Engine/Steward	
QMED.....	0
Pumpman	0
Oiler	0
Wiper	0
Steward	0
Cook.....	0
Messman.....	0
Total Jobs Shipped-All Depts.....	25
Total B, C, & D Shipped-All Depts.	12
Total Registered "A"	25
Total Registered "B"	24
Total Registered "C"	13
Total Registered "D"	25

REMINDER:
If you have six months or less to go before any of your documentation is set to expire, please get started on the renewal process.

VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

February 2026

CAPE HORN — Christian Demesa, Delegate. *Cape Horn* arriving in Subic Bay, PI. Crew morale is good, no beefs. Deck gang getting decent overtime. Ian Serra, Bosun.

CAPE HUDSON — Potential mission coming up for *Cape Hudson*. Sometime mid — May, more than likely. Going to the usual far east mission Philippines and Malaysia. Dennis Sumague, Bosun.

HAINA TANKER — Smooth and steady sailing with the usual back and forth Japan/Korea run. 3 AB's running the whole unlicensed-deck operation. Gang getting plenty of shore time. Great ship for anyone looking to get started with SUP as an AB.

RED CLOUD — Tim Tess, Delegate. Red Cloud had a smooth cargo upload in Corpus Christie, TX. Crew rode out a convergence of storms in the North Atlantic and are getting ready to drop the hook in Poland. Bosun has been getting approved for projects and gang has been stripping and waxing house decks/staterooms, chipping and painting multiple holds, and spot chipping any necessary areas on the ship. Gang

is doing well and enjoying current Wi-Fi on board has brought great privilege to the crew. Frank Duffin, Bosun.

USNS PILILAAU — Jeff Bagueio, Delegate. No Beef, crew morale is good, remaining in Diego Garcia for the time being. Gang has been getting 4 hours OT a day. Xerces Cunanan, Bosun.

USNS SISLER — Diamond Payne, Delegate. Overtime is still going strong and crew morale is doing well. In the coming weeks, personnel are coming aboard for a short period of time. Potential voyage to Okinawa in the works. Patrick Nicholas, Bosun.

USNS DAHL — Brandon Hubbard, Delegate. Dahl did a cargo offload at Blount Island military base in Jacksonville FL, after a Pacific crossing and trip through the Panama Canal. SUP gang delivered quality deck seamanship to fulfill this mission safely and swiftly. Crew is now heading to Bayonne for dry dock operations before majority of the crew is sent home and ship goes to reserve status. Dominic Metz, Bosun.

USNS SEAY — Rodencio Purganan, Delegate. Seay is leaving Saipan heading to Guam and Philippines. Sherwin Bongayan, Bosun.

USNS POMEROY — Lucas Hayes, Delegate. Ship is due to go into reserve status April 1st. Pomeroy is getting prepared for their upcoming smart inspection. Several riders coming aboard from Marad and MSC. Ship is getting ready to untie and go offshore to run anchors and engines. Lifting deck hatches open from main deck down to golf deck, ramps/side-ports as well. Deck gang has been getting 4 hours OT. Joshua Sheldrick Bosun.

Sam Worth

SUP BRANCH REPORTS

HONOLULU

February 2026

SHIPPING: The following jobs were dispatched for the month: 3 AB Day steady, 1 AB Day Relief, 1 AB Watch steady, 2 AB Watch Steady, 1 AB Watch Return, and 1 Ordinary. There were 14 Standbys Jobs dispatched for the month.

REGISTERED: 14 A-Cards, 19 B-Cards, 9 C-Cards, and 1 D-Cards.

SHIPS CHECKED: *Islander, Oceania, D.K. Inouye, Manulani, R.J. Pfeiffer* (PMH not payable. 2 hour callout is.), *Manukai, Lurline, Kaimana Hila, Mahimahi, Maunawili, Matsonia*, and the Paint & Rigging Gang all running smooth, with few if any beefs.

Agent's Report:

I would like to wish retiring MFOW Agent Mario Higa the very best going forward. Mario is arguably one of the hardest working Agents. On top of the day to day operations. His efforts to volunteer out in the community on behalf of his organization was eye opening when I first came into office. I have tried to keep up with him. But it's not easy. Mario is definitely

a "Can Do" guy. If there's a possibility, he can do something for others. He always goes above and beyond to try and get it done. The world is a better place because of people like Brother Higa.

As Mario heads down the gangway. I would also like to welcome Brother Don Ngo as he will be the new MFOW Agent. I'm confident Don will bring the same energy, tenacity, and diligence as Mario. Also, we want to bid a fond Aloha and Mahalo to Andrew Furuseth School of Seamanship Director, Sister Berit Eriksson as she sets out for adventure in retirement. Her dedication to our members is truly appreciated. I will miss her sage advice and witty conversation. Someone get that lady a well-deserved Mai Tai.

As always. If you have six months to go before your documents are about to expire. Let's get going on the renewal process.

Patrick Max Weisbarth,
Honolulu Branch Agent

WILMINGTON

February 2026

Shipping: Bosun, 5; AB/W, 9; AB/D, 4; OS/ STOS, 2. Standby: 42.

Total Jobs Shipped: 62 Registrations: A 27 B 41 C 8 D 6.

Ships Visited: Making regular visits as time permits me. Also, keeping in contact by phone and email.

Agent's Report:

The props are turning and the jobs are rolling in. If you're looking to register here in Wilmington, send an email with your book number, the last quarter your dues were paid, and your position. The port's been running hard and I've already missed a registration trying to handle it over the phone, so from here on out I won't be taking registration info by phone. Send it in by email.

APL has been talking things over with Mr. Gary, the Shoreside Bosun. Sounds like standby timesheets will likely go back

to the halls for submission. My guess is the ships have been dropping the ball, which is exactly why I always tell you don't leave the job without a copy of your signed timesheet in hand once the work's done.

HQ has also let us know that if you're in the pre-hire process for Patriot and you end up paying out of pocket for any pre-hire vaccinations, keep your receipts. Submit them to the Captain of the vessel or turn them in through your Union Representative.

Stay sharp out there. Check your documents and make sure nothing's creeping up on expiration. Keep your dues paid, and make sure you're showing up to your monthly Union meeting.

Fraternally Submitted,
Leo Martinez, Book #19362
Wilmington Port Agent

SEATTLE

February 2026

Shipping: 1 AB/W (A); 1 Navy AB (B); 2 OS (D); 2 Standby AB (A, B).

Registered: 5 A card for a total of 9; 2 B card for a total of 9; 2 C card for a total of 3; 2 D card for a total of 3.

Agent's Report:

If you are found Not Fit for Duty, whether from injury aboard or ashore, or from a prolonged serious illness, it is

important that you immediately contact the Welfare Plan or your Branch of registration. You are part of a Union, and there are benefits through our Welfare Plan that are available to you while you are healing.

Please ask about it the next time you are in the hall.

Fraternally,
Brandon Bohannon, Seattle Port Agent

BUSINESS AGENT'S REPORT

February 2026

If members need to renew their BST or want to apply for LNG classes see your local agent to fill out a training application to submit to our newly appointed SUP Training Coordinator Liz Zeiger. Berit Eriksson is pulling the pin in April sailing off into the sunset. I would like to thank her for her years of service to the membership and dedication and to wish her all the best in her new endeavors.

Mahi Mahi — Oakland #62 Mark Relajo delegate in and out short stay routine with this ship. The company called for std — bys. It's been a while and needed the extra hands for stores and other work to be done. We are still scheduled for the shipyard in April. Matson provided the crew with Chinese visas, but hoping for Singapore. Shipyards in China are a pain in the ass, always subject to change; they don't want anything to do with the USA. Ultimately, there's nothing we can't handle with Insin Idris as Bosun.

Maunawili — Oakland#62 delegate Christopher Go took over the sheets from Gerry Marshall all is running smooth with a good gang on a good ship. Happy ship working steady getting the work done SUP style on the Northern triangle with Brandon Keopuhiwa as Bosun.

RJ Pfeiffer — Oakland#62 Kim Sloggett delegate routine stay in and out of Port. The ship sailed for Honolulu on schedule without any issues on the Northern triangle in good hands with Rhonda Benotio as Bosun.

Maunalani — Checked in with this vessel with little or no issues.

Kaimokuiki — Still laid-up in Malaysia, no word on her.

Manoa — Still laid-up in Singapore Shipyard, schedule to complete repairs sometime in the Middle of March calling the crew back around the same time, always subject to change.

WHEN MEMBERS ARE DISPATCHED TO THE GANGWAY SECURITY MUST MAINTAIN WATCHES FROM THE TIME OF VESSEL ARRIVAL TO THE TIME OF VESSEL DEPARTURE.

President LB Johnson — Oakland #56 Steve Fuentes, the newly elected delegate sailed on schedule for Yokohama with no issues. This is a good ship with a hardworking crew. Working steadily, getting the work done SUP Style with Rico Enclair Jr. as Bosun.

President JQ Adams — Oakland#56 John Chiovaru delegate working as much the weather permits, This trip topside trying to cut corners red lining, trying to make a name for self himself hoping to become steady. How many times we seen this Cheap Charlie tactic with hard working gang. With Scott Oliphant as Bosun.

APL Eagle — Bahrain: Tauqfiq Wasel delegate for the last week. They witnessed missiles exploding in the oil refineries from a short distance away; it was very intense. Heard the Airport was temporarily shut down. There's relief in other departments wanting to go home. Saher Ali as Bosun

CMA CGM Phoenix — Janan Johair, delegate round trip back to the east coast on the European run all is well scheduled back in Baltimore on the March 13th and New York on the 16th always subject due to weather conditions crossing back. Marc Calario as Bosun.

SFBP: Pier#9 — Delegate Chris Auer Training continues for the temporary deckhands to see if they have what it takes to be a Boat Operator for the San Francisco Bar pilots its not for everyone. Famous last words quoted many are Called few are Chosen. Steve Ross, Dock Bosun.

Pilot Boat Pittsburg — Boat Operator Big Mike Koller reports a Hazard condition with heavy debris floating trees, Light poles are barely visible. Last week, a duck blind was floating free in the middle of the channel and had to tow it out of the way. That's when the decision was made to work daylight only for the safety of the crew and the Pilot Boat condition was to hazardous. Eric Weintraub as Deckhand.

Agents Report — Shipping volume is about the same as last month — slow and very competitive even with our Senior members. Matson jobs are few and in between, and if you're looking for those jobs, they aren't here at Headquarters. For our entry-level members need to look into getting Government certificates or see Vice President Sam Worth to inquire about Chevron.

Along with this be sure ALL your Documents are current and if you have less than 6 months remaining, it's time to start the renewal process.

Dispatched commercial jobs and Gangway security watches, assist Martha with the up-grades and worked in the front office.

Sincerely, Roy Tufono.