

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 14, 2025

The Honorable Donald Trump
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Pete Hegseth
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dear President Trump and Secretary Hegseth,

We write today with extreme concern over the impact that the freeze on federal hiring may have on American shipbuilding. The United States today requires a Navy that is larger, more capable, and ready for future conflict anywhere across the globe. Since the end of the Cold War, the U.S. has underinvested in our shipyards – both public and private – leading to a diminished ability to produce and maintain ships at the rate required to match our adversaries. They have watched and taken advantage of our reduced shipbuilding capacity of our industrial base and from our severe shortage of skilled laborers needed to weld steel, engineer hulls, and install complex electrical systems.

Congress is continuing to work in a bipartisan fashion to enable shipyards to address the critical shortage in labor. We have and will support the American workforce by investing in training programs, collaborating with educational institutions to create pathways in shipbuilding, and providing additional funding to support hiring more Americans to work in our great shipyards. These efforts have revitalized our American heritage of building the world's best ships and providing good paying, stable jobs for hard working Americans. These investments are not only in our constituents' and economy's best interest, but they are also in the best interest of our national security.

Our shipbuilders have a daunting task ahead of them. In 2024, China was estimated to have a shipbuilding capacity 230 times greater than that of the United States. Our Navy and Coast Guard must compete with our adversaries across the globe, primarily Russia and China in the Pacific, Atlantic and Arctic. Navy undersea capabilities, specifically the Virginia-class and upcoming Columbia-class submarines, play a vital role in strategic deterrence around the globe. Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard surface vessels are a critical necessity to meeting the threat environment in the Indo-Pacific and Arctic regions. U.S. naval and maritime forces also play an integral part of protecting shipping and deterring terrorism in waters off the coast of Africa and in the Red Sea and defend against drug smugglers, human traffickers, and other nefarious activity on our Western and Eastern coastlines. Without continued investment in shipbuilding and our shipbuilders, we cannot hope to enable our Navy and Coast Guard in achieving their mission critical objectives.

On January 20, President Trump signed an Executive Order to freeze federal hiring and require federal workers to return to in-person working–without explicitly exempting shipbuilding efforts. Over the last month, DOGE's job cuts and threats of further cuts have forced some of our shipyards to cancel hiring events and put their own hiring pauses in place. The chaos and uncertainty caused by these actions is unproductive and harmful to the important growth that is

needed at our shipyards. The impact that these orders have on our country's ability to build ships, compete with our adversaries on the seas, and hire Americans for good paying jobs, will be catastrophic to our country's safety. We implore you to lift the moratorium on federal hiring freeze, stop cutting jobs for critical industries and agencies, and allow employees to work where they are most effective, whether that be at home or in-person.

Our country does not have the luxury of pausing global events and China will not stop ramping up its naval forces to out compete ours. Hiring the required laborers for ship building is a matter of strategic, national, and military necessity. Fully supporting the shipbuilding workforce must be a priority for this Administration. We appreciate your attention to this matter.

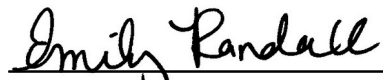
Sincerely,



Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



Chris Pappas
Member of Congress



Emily Randall
Member of Congress



Ed Case
Member of Congress



Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Member of Congress



Joe Courtney
Member of Congress



Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



Donald Norcross
Member of Congress

Congress of the United States

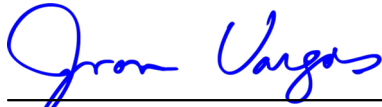
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