

Ranking Member Cantwell Opening Statement
Hearing on Sea Change: Reviving Commercial Shipbuilding
Tuesday, October 28, 2025
[\[VIDEO\]](#)

Thank you, Chairman Sullivan, and thank you to Senator Blunt Rochester, and thank you for holding this important hearing on shipbuilding and I appreciate our witnesses being here. Shipbuilding is a bipartisan issue, and we all agree that we need to do more to have American-built and American-crewed ships to expand global trade, protect our supply chain, and bolster national security. It was great to have the MARAD nominee before us last week who shared an enthusiastic vision of how the United States needs to regain our maritime leadership. I look forward to confirming him in this spot.

Following decades of decline, the United States constructs just... 0.2% of the world's commercial shipping tonnage, while China, South Korea, Japan build more than 90%. In fact, in 2022, China had 1,794 commercial ocean-going ships under construction. South Korea had 734, Japan had 587, Europe had 319, and the United States, we were just building 5.

Our economy depends on trade. We know that in the Pacific Northwest, where about 40% of our state's [jobs are] dependent on trade, if we do not...revive our shipbuilding capacity, our nation will not be able to compete at this particular moment in the Pacific. That puts our economy at risk, it creates a dangerous weakness in our national defense, so we must continue to protect the Jones Act, expand and streamline Title XI loan guarantee program, and modernize our infrastructure. And we must do more to maintain American cargo through cargo preference oversight and through support for legislation like Senator Moran's bill to move food aid to USDA.

We need to invest in the technology and training to establish cutting-edge maritime ecosystems so that our shipyards and our workers can build the most sophisticated ships in the world. In the state of Washington, the maritime sector supports 174,000 jobs through maritime logistics, shipping, ship building, seafood, maritime transportation, and associated trades. In total, the sector supports \$45 billion of economic revenue and shipbuilding in particular are good family wage jobs with an average salary of \$120,000 -- can you imagine that -- an average job.

Ms. Snow is here today, representing her family's shipyard in Seattle, which has grown from 30 employees in 2020 to more than 100 employees today. As our shipbuilding and maritime economy is at a crossroads, I encourage my colleagues to listen to Ms. Snow as she speaks about the model they've developed to try to bring more talent to the shipyard. And by recruiting new talent to shipbuilding, she is meeting the demand for employees but also providing us with how this issue may be applied across the country.

Mr. Paxton, when it comes to thinking big, you represent one of the largest shipyards in the country, including Vigor, who has operated in the state of Washington, so I look forward to hearing from you about how you can boost capacity in the larger yards, including financing and your support for workforce challenges.

Mr. Vogel, as a logistics expert at Tote, I welcome your views on construction management and how we better support the U.S. flag fleet. My colleague Senator Sullivan and I have worked on many issues, including getting the port at Anchorage fully supported and the capacity that it will take to continue to deliver important products there. And Dr. Mercogliano... I understand you have proposed a 'mariner reserve', similar to military reserves, and that is an idea I hope our committee will consider and think about.

Thank you all for being here. I look forward to working with my two colleagues here. I think the President, I think the MARAD nominee, and I think the Secretary of Transportation have all said they want to make this maritime revival a national priority. I do too. So, look forward to hearing the comments at today's hearing. Thank you.