

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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April 1, 2025

Mr. Terence Emmert
Acting Secretary
United States Department of the Navy
100 Navy Pentagon
Washington, DC 20350

Dear Acting Secretary Emmert:

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is seeking information on how the U.S. Navy is assisting the U.S. Maritime Administration's (MARAD) current recruiting crisis. Congress authorized the Navy to establish a targeted campaign to educate and recruit individuals for careers in the maritime sector.¹ The Committee is concerned about the recent recruitment and retention issues facing MARAD's sealift capability, and requests a staff level briefing from the Navy to facilitate oversight of this matter.

We understand that the maritime recruitment problem is basic: individuals, particularly young people, simply are not aware of opportunities in the American maritime industry.² The Navy has experience administering these type of campaigns³ and the funds⁴ to help its own Military Sealift Command (MSC) attract the talent it needs to secure the nation.

The U.S.-flag merchant marine and the maritime sector are a critical arm of national security and are vital to Navy operations around the world. The U.S. Transportation Command (TRANSCOM) and MSC depend on the U.S.-flag merchant marine, with the security protection of American crews, to move sensitive defense materials wherever and whenever they are needed.⁵ MARAD data identified a shortage of 1,800 mariners that would be needed to support a full-scale conflict and this problem has only been exacerbated since the COVID-19 pandemic and in the wake of widespread early retirements.⁶ The shortage is so extreme that MSC recently announced

¹ Servicemember Quality of Life Improvement and National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025, Pub. L. No. 118-159, §539A, 138 Stat. 3939 (2024).

² Brett Davis, *Career Advancement: MARAD Has a Story to Tell of Good Jobs, Work-Life Balance*, CENTER FOR MARITIME STRATEGY (Aug. 2, 2024).

³ Mike Brest, *Military to use social media and streaming to help recruitment during Super Bowl*, THE WASH. EXAM'R (Feb. 11, 2024).

⁴ Sam Lagrone, *Navy Awards BlueForge Alliance \$951M Contract for 'Uplifting' U.S. Submarine Industrial Base*, U.S. NAVAL INST. (Sept. 10, 2024).

⁵ *U.S. Navy Confirms Plan to Idle 17 Auxiliary Ships to Improve MSC Workforce*, THE MARITIME EXECUTIVE (Nov. 22, 2024).

⁶ Davis, *supra* note 2.

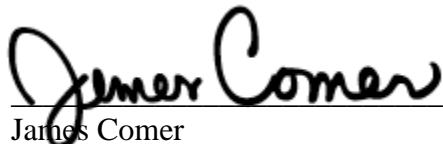
that 17 of its vessels will be idled due to manpower issues.⁷ Due to the lengthy timeline required to recruit and train merchant mariners, the Committee requests more information about how the Navy is prioritizing MARAD's recruitment crisis.

To assist with the Committee's oversight of this matter, we request a staff briefing no later than April 8, 2025, covering, at a minimum, the following information:

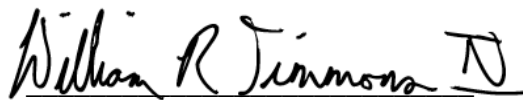
1. Steps the Navy has taken to engage the maritime and shipbuilding industry on the unique challenges of attracting talent;
2. Steps the Navy has taken to engage with providers of maritime training and education, including state maritime academies, the Merchant Marine Academy, and labor training organizations;
3. Steps the Navy has taken to engage MSC and the Maritime Administration;
4. How much the Navy will resource this program; and
5. Any other steps the Navy is taking to address MARAD recruitment challenges.

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee of the U.S. House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate "any matter" at "any time" under House Rule X. To schedule the briefing or to ask any related follow-up questions, please contact the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform Majority staff at (202) 225-5074. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



James Comer
Chairman
Committee on Oversight and
Government Reform



William Timmons
Chairman
Subcommittee on Military and Foreign Affairs

cc: The Honorable Gerald Connolly, Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

The Honorable Suhas Subramanyam, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Military and Foreign Affairs

⁷ *Supra* note 5.