

Hi, Fred Nelson for Community Comment,

I have been reading an interesting article in the Navy League magazine "Seapower" written by Paul N. "Chip" Jaenichen the U.S. Maritime Administrator. What he has to say is not good news for the maritime industry and should give us all concern for the future of America's security and economy. The general public, as a whole, is not familiar with our maritime industry. This lack of interest is a detriment in attracting the younger generation to maritime professions. In addition, life at sea for extended periods is not conducive to family activities or any of the myriad of events that life has to hold which tends to encourage younger mariners to change careers or to take shore side employment. Worldwide shipping competition sees more cargoes being taken over by ships from other nations with U.S. flagged ships being laid up for lack of business. From January of Twenty Ten until this past spring the U.S. flagged merchant fleet has experienced a loss of sixty seven vessels which eliminated two thousand nine hundred jobs. This type of instability is also causing trained and experienced mariners to look elsewhere for stable positions and, in addition, an expected high number of mariners will be retiring. Our nation depends upon the U.S. mariners and their ships to project and sustain our troops, support our allies and defend our freedom throughout the world. Though the deep sea merchant fleet is dwindling, there is an increased demand for trained mariners to operate our vessels, tugboats, towboats and barges for the nation's domestic marine highways. Today, there are six state maritime academies and one Federal Merchant Marine Academy which produce most of the licensed merchant officers. They are: the California Maritime Academy located at Mare Island, Great Lakes Maritime Academy, Maine Maritime Academy, Massachusetts maritime Academy, State University of New York Maritime College, and Texas Maritime Academy plus the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy at Kings Point, New York. No other industry relies on only seven colleges to produce all of its licensed professionals. Although these schools are able to meet the current demands for licensed mariners, there is a problem of aged training ships. Each of the state colleges has a training vessel with an average age of thirty five years. The Twenty Sixteen proposed national budget does include Five Million dollars for the design of five new "multi mission vessels" which would solve the training ship problem but that is only for design, not the construction. The nation's maritime industry needs much more attention than it has been getting. The public needs more information on how important this is to our nation but communication seems to be lacking. Coastal dwellers are, more than likely, better informed than the inland resident. If you have a son or daughter who is approaching college age and is undecided as to choice of profession, you might suggest they check out the possibilities of a maritime career.

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