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Christening Signals New Jobs for SIU CIVMARS

New jobs are on the horizon for members of the SIU Government Services Division following the Nov. 6 christening and launch of the *USNS Harvey Milk*.

The ceremony took place at union shipyard General Dynamics NASSCO in San Diego, where the vessel was built.

According to NASSCO, the *USNS Harvey Milk* is the second ship for the U.S. Navy's John Lewis-class fleet oiler program. The new vessel's crew will include SIU CIVAMARS.

Stuart Milk, nephew of the ship's namesake and Co-Founder and President of the Harvey Milk Foundation, served as the principal speaker at the ceremony, which also featured remarks from NASSCO and U.S. Navy representatives.

U.S. Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-California) and Paula Neira, Navy Veteran and Clinical Program Director of the Johns Hopkins Center for Transgender Health were the ship's sponsors. Prior to launching the 742-foot-long ship down the ways, Neira christened the vessel with the traditional champagne bottle break alongside the hull.

"We are justifiably proud of every ship we build, but this one is special because of her namesake. Today, we are honoring Stuart's lifetime of selfless service, his hope for equality, and a world without hate," said David Carver, president of General Dynamics NASSCO. "On behalf of the 3,500 employees of General Dynamics NASSCO, I am proud to present the future *USNS Harvey Milk* for christening."

Former Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus declared the John Lewis-class of oilers be named after leaders who fought for civil and human rights. The second of six ships honors Harvey Milk, an activist who dedicated his life promoting equality.

"Leaders like Harvey Milk taught us that diversity of backgrounds and experiences help contribute to the strength and resolve of our nation," said Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro. "There is no doubt that the future Sailors aboard this ship will be inspired by Milk's life and legacy."

"The christening of the *USNS Harvey Milk* marks another historic milestone in the history of our Navy and our country. Harvey Milk's words and actions brought hope and inspiration to many for whom our nation's lofty rhetoric of equality and inclusion were not yet reality," said Neira.



Above, guests listen to remarks during the christening ceremony for the *USNS Harvey Milk*. Below, Paula Neira does the honors, breaking a champagne bottle alongside the hull. (Photos courtesy General Dynamics NASSCO)

In 2016, General Dynamics NASSCO was awarded the contract by the U.S. Navy for the detailed design and construction of the next generation of fleet oilers, the John Lewis class. The contract calls for the design and construction of six 742-foot-long oilers with a full load displacement of 49,850 tons. Designed to transfer fuel to U.S. Navy carrier strike group ships operating at sea, the oilers have the capacity to carry 157,000 barrels of oil, a significant dry cargo capacity, aviation capability and up to a speed of 20 knots. These vessels will replace the current T-AO 187-class fleet replacement oilers.

In addition to the christening of this ship, two vessels in the T-AO class fleet oiler program for the U.S. Navy – the future *USNS Earl Warren* (T-AO 207), and the future *USNS Robert F. Kennedy* (T-AO 208) – are under construction. The lead ship, the future *USNS John Lewis* (T-AO 205), was launched earlier this year.



Rep. Luria Thanks U.S. Mariners, American-Flag Fleet

U.S. Rep. Elaine Luria (D-Virginia) praised the work of American mariners and the U.S.-flag fleet while calling upon Congress to continue its support for these workers and the industry.

Luria, a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy who served in the Navy for 20 years before being elected to the House of Representatives in 2018, made her statement on the House floor Oct. 25.

"The United States needs a robust U.S.-flag maritime industry and a trained and qualified mariner workforce to support our

surge sealift capabilities in responding to the crises and military operations around the world when called upon," the congresswoman said. "Further, the U.S.-flag fleet routinely responds to disasters and emergencies, moves critical government and military cargo around the world, and carries American farm products in support of U.S. international development programs to help developing countries in need."

The member of both the House Armed Services and Homeland Security committees called for continuing support for the Maritime

Security Program, which provides funds for militarily useful U.S.-flag commercial vessels and crews available to the armed forces in the event of war or national emergencies.

"The shipping industry is facing unprecedented challenges today, but one thing we know all too well is that a strong commercial maritime capability enhances our national security," she added.

She wrapped up her address by thanking "the U.S.-flag fleet and the U.S. Merchant Mariners who work every day to support our military and our nation."



U.S. Rep. Elaine Luria
(D-Virginia)

President's Column

More on PRO Act

During the White House Labor Day observance, both President Biden and AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler emphasized the importance of passing legislation that



Michael Sacco

would boost workers' rights. Biden reiterated his full support for the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act, while Shuler explained why the bill remains organized labor's top legislative priority.

The bill already passed in the House of Representatives but faces challenges in the Senate, mainly because of a likely filibuster.

It has been several months since I wrote about the PRO Act. For those who missed the earlier communication or who are interested in a refresher, I'll start by pointing out that nearly half of all nonunion workers (more than 60 million people) would join a union today if given the chance, according to non-partisan polling. Public approval of unions, at 65 percent, has reached one of its highest marks in decades.

Union members can bargain for higher wages and are much more likely to have health care and a pension. The union advantage is even greater for people of color, women, immigrants, and others who have confronted workplace discrimination. A union contract is a potent weapon because it establishes fair and transparent systems for hiring and firing, wages and more.

The National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) of 1935 was a staple of the New Deal. The NLRA led to a groundswell of organizing that built the greatest middle class in history.

Immediately after World War II, though, some corporations and their anti-worker political allies started conspiring to render the law toothless. They got pro-business congresses in 1947 and 1959 to weaken the law. In recent decades, employers have violated the NLRA with impunity, routinely denying workers their basic right to join with co-workers for fairness on the job.

Things have gotten so bad, there is an entire union-busting industry that basically works nonstop to block workers from exercising those rights. And, according to the AFL-CIO, in nearly half of all union organizing drives, employers break the law. They lie, threaten, and routinely fire union supporters. Workers are forced to attend mandatory meetings focused on union-bashing. Any fines for this illegal behavior are often inconsequential.

This explains how we have reached the point where more than 60 million people would vote to join a union, but only one in 10 workers actually has one. Not coincidentally, as the collective strength of workers to negotiate for better pay and benefits has eroded, the gap between rich and poor has reached levels unseen since the Great Depression. The fall of union density has been a direct cause of rising inequality over the past four decades.

Passing the PRO Act will update the NLRA and give workers a fair opportunity to join or form a union. Once workers vote to form a union, the PRO Act will require the National Labor Relations Board to set a time limit for the employer to commence bargaining a first contract. (Too often, when workers choose to form a union, employers stall the bargaining process to avoid reaching an agreement.)

The PRO act includes many other benefits for workers and their families – and their employers. Workers who have a voice on the job are the best kind.

Significantly, the PRO Act will finally end so-called "right to work" (for less) laws once and for all. These laws have been promoted by a network of billionaires and special interest groups in an effort to divide working people and give more power to corporations at the expense of workers. They have had the effect of lowering wages and eroding pensions and health care coverage in states where they have been adopted.

We've got a great opportunity to help enact the PRO Act. The SIU will continue pushing to make it reality by getting it through the Senate and onto President Biden's desk for signature.

SIU Directory

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Gen. Van Ovost Takes Helm At Transportation Command

U.S. Air Force Gen. Jacqueline Van Ovost on Oct. 15 became the first woman to lead the U.S. Transportation Command (TRANSCOM), officially taking the reigns during a change of command ceremony at Scott Air Force Base, Illinois. The components of TRANSCOM include the Army's Surface Deployment and Distribution Command, the Navy's Military Sealift Command and the Air Force's Air Mobility Command.

During the ceremony, Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III said, "I'm not the world's most experienced logistician, but I am one of the world's most experienced consumers. So, I know that I'm looking right now at the people who make the American military move. On any given day, some 115 TRANSCOM railcars are moving DOD equipment, 33 ships are getting underway and 1,500 trucks are delivering cargo. And about every two minutes, a TRANSCOM plane is taking off or landing somewhere around the world – hauling supplies, refueling aircraft or moving patients."

Army Gen. Mark A. Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, commended the professionalism and capabilities inherent in the command. He said TRANSCOM is the key to American military successes going back to World War II, and noted the Red Ball Express (a convoy system) that kept Allied forces supplied over the beaches of Normandy in 1944 after the U.S. Merchant Marine delivered the cargo. That same spirit still permeates today's U.S. Transportation Command, the chairman said.

"I assure you, TRANSCOM will defend our nation through rapid power projection and sustainment, while continuing to build a unity of effort through the strong bonds of our industry partners and our allies and partners," Van Ovost said. "We will also remain committed to our most critical asset – our people."

Van Ovost is a career mobility airman who graduated from the U.S. Air Force Academy in 1988 and has since commanded the 384th Air Refueling Squadron at McConnell Air Force Base, Kansas; the 12th Flying Training Wing at Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph, Texas; and the 89th Airlift Wing, or Presidential Airlift Wing, at Joint Base Andrews, Maryland.

A pilot with more than 4,200 hours in 30-plus aircraft, Van Ovost led Air Mobility Command at Scott Air Force Base since August 2020, overseeing 100,000 military and civilian personnel and 1,100 aircraft spanning aerial refueling tankers, massive cargo transport planes and VIP jets. She's also served as the Joint Staff's vice director; the Air Force's staff director; U.S. Central Command's head of mobility forces; and vice commander of the U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Cen-



Gen. Jacqueline Van Ovost
Commander
U.S. Transportation Command

ter, a school focused on rapid-response and combat mobility operations.

Austin said that Van Ovost is the perfect person to follow outgoing Commander Army Gen. Stephen Lyons and to continue the development of the command. "She's a legend of a leader, and the American military is lucky to have her on the job," the secretary said. "I know that she'll continue to push the envelope and exceed all expectations, because that's what she's always done."

"When people ask me 'How does TRANSCOM do it? What is the secret to success?' I tell them the truth. We are blessed with incredible people from around the globe," Lyons said. "To the men and women of TRANSCOM, it has been my greatest honor to serve as your 13th commander."

Van Ovost expressed her appreciation, and thanked Lyons for his leadership and service: "We are all grateful to have been under your command and to have taken part in your legacy," she said. "It is an honor of a lifetime to be selected to lead the United States Transportation Command as we prepare to meet the challenges of tomorrow, today. Together, we will deliver."

Rear Adm. Phillips Nominated for MARAD Post

President Biden on Oct. 14 announced the nomination of Rear Adm. Ann Phillips (USN ret.) to be the next U.S. Maritime Administrator. According to the press release from the White House, "Ann Phillips is a leader in the field of coastal resilience and climate impact on national security at the regional, national and international level. In her current appointment as the first Special Assistant to the Governor of Virginia for Coastal Adaptation and Protection, she is building a collaborative, whole of government and community approach to address the impact of coastal flooding across the Commonwealth, including the development of Virginia's first Coastal Resilience Master Plan. In particular, she coordinates across Federal, State, local and other partners to create equitable strategies to address rising waters and climate impact to federal, maritime, and other critical coastal infrastructure assets in Virginia."

Phillips served nearly 31 years on active duty prior to her current appointment. She received her commission through the Naval Reserve Officers Training Corps upon graduation from the University of North Carolina in 1983. She served aboard

two vessels – the *USS Cape Cod* and the *USS San Jose* – during Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm. She was the first commanding officer aboard the *USS Mustin*.

As the executive assistant to the 6th Fleet Commander, Phillips was involved in the deployment of goods in support of the Pakistani earthquake relief efforts. Prior to her retirement, she was commander of Expeditionary Strike Group Two, which included 14 vessels and 10 subordinate commands – all part of the Amphibious Expeditionary Forces along the U.S. East Coast. Phillips retired from the Navy in 2014.



Rear Adm. Ann Phillips

How to Become an SIU Member

Joining the SIU is easy and an important step in protecting your workplace rights. The union's website – www.seafarers.org – includes printable PDF versions of forms that mariners may use to request and authorize payroll deductions for labor organization dues. The forms are posted at:

<https://www.seafarers.org/news/labor-maritime-news/civmar-news/>

Forms are also available under "SIU Forms" in the ABOUT tab.

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Maritime Industry Focuses Efforts On Helping Ensure Safe Workplaces

The American maritime industry is ramping up efforts to promote workplace environments that are safe for everyone.

Those joint endeavors involve the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) and its Maritime Administration, U.S.-flag vessel operators, public and private maritime schools, maritime unions and others.

As previously reported, in late September 2021, an anonymous member of the class of 2022 at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA) at King's Point, New York, submitted an account detailing her alleged sexual assault during her Sea Year. According to her writing, she was raped by the first engineer aboard her vessel (who was her supervisor as a member of the engine department).

The anonymous victim's report is posted online on the website of the organization Maritime Legal Aid and Advocacy. She describes sexual harassment as a common occurrence among the female students at King's Point. A second alleged victim posted a similar account a few weeks after the initial one appeared online.

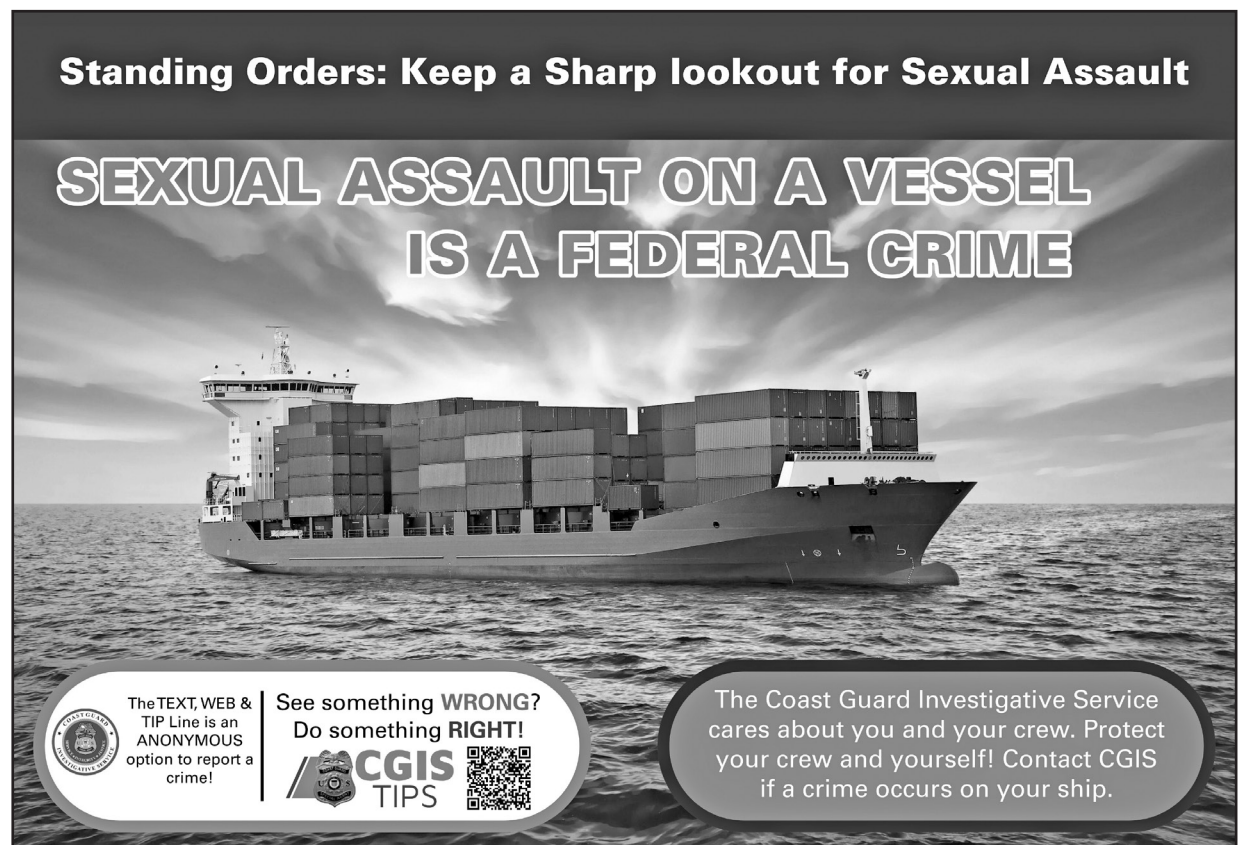
Subsequent, ongoing investigations by the DOT and USMMA (and others) are aimed at pinpointing the scope and specifics of the problem and taking corrective action. In the interim, the USMMA "Sea Year" program has been suspended indefinitely.

The SIU and its affiliated Paul Hall Center for Maritime Training and Education (PHC) have not been implicated in any of the accusations or investigations, but both the union and the school are actively working to shore up safety for everyone. Their joint efforts include conducting an anonymous, electronic sexual assault/sexual harassment (SASH) survey at the school; circulating a SASH flyer from the U.S. Coast Guard's Investigative Service; developing a new SASH brochure; participating in industry-wide meetings (some of which have included DOT Secretary Pete Buttigieg and DOT Deputy Secretary Polly Trottenberg); and reviewing the school's SASH policy.

The SIU also teamed up with other unions in issuing a letter to their respective members in late October. Signing the communication were SIU President Michael Sacco, American Maritime Officers President Paul Doell, MEBA President Adam Vokac, MM&P President Don Marcus, SUP President Dave Connolly, MFOW President Anthony Poplawski and ARA President Kelly Anderson.

The letter reads: "As you know, our industry recently made unwanted headlines due to allegations of sexual assault and alcohol consumption aboard an American-flag vessel. We take the incident with utmost seriousness, but, regardless of how that particular case plays out, the undersigned unions – who represent the majority of deep-sea U.S. mariners – are taking this opportunity to reinforce our collective commitment to helping ensure that all seafarers have a safe workplace free of fear, harassment, bullying and any kind of assault. We are in the process of thoroughly but quickly re-examining and, where warranted, updating policies and practices that will facilitate education, protection and mutual respect within the ranks of our memberships and throughout the industry.

"Turning a blind eye is not acceptable. All seafarers must be committed to active opposition to any type of harassment, bullying or discriminatory behavior. It is our collective duty to protect and respect our shipmates. As



The SIU has helped circulate this flyer from the Coast Guard in an effort to promote safety.

maritime professionals and decent human beings, we must look out for one another.

"When a mariner experiences or observes harassment, bullying or discriminatory behavior, the alarm must go off. Such conduct must immediately be stopped and/or reported. The hierarchy aboard ship, the power relationship inherent in that structure and the closed shipboard environment can become coercive. Mariners must not be compelled to endure an unsafe workplace for the sake of their paychecks, careers, or reputations.

"Each of our organizations is committed to ensuring the safety and fair treatment of every member. Realizing we are dealing with a social problem that can be magnified aboard ship, every member must share the commitment to speak out and act when they observe shipboard bullying, harassment, discrimination, or assault.

"We know that our members are professionals, and that the overwhelming majority of U.S. Merchant Mariners are decent folks who work hard to make a living in a unique industry. We are often in leadership positions aboard ship. Our personal example and insistence on the safety and respectful treatment of our shipmates is the essence of leadership. Whatever the rating, experience, or qualifications, a good shipmate protects their co-workers and does not tolerate any forms of abuse."

During the November SIU membership meeting in Piney Point, Sacco and SIU Executive Vice President Augie Tellez encouraged Seafarers to treat each other with respect

and protect one another like family, whether aboard ship, at the hiring halls, at the PHC or elsewhere ashore.

The Sea Year program in particular has gotten the attention of Congress. On Oct. 29, six members (all Democrats) wrote to Buttigieg calling for remediation. Signing the letter were Reps. Peter DeFazio, Adam Smith, Joe Courtney, Maria Cantwell, Jackie Speier, and Salud Carbajal.

The letter in part said: "We are very concerned with the recent allegations of sexual assault by a female cadet at the United States Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA) during her Sea Year experience in 2019. This brave female cadet not only shared her story on the terrible circumstance she endured while at sea, but also detailed alarming statistics regarding the number of other female cadets within her class who have also been harassed and assaulted.... In 2016, the Department of Transportation stood down the Sea Year program to implement changes to better protect students. But those changes clearly did not work, and we are concerned that the cadets remain in danger."

They recommended suspending the Sea Year program for the current term and added, "Prior to the resumption of Sea Year, we request the USMMA develop a public written action plan that includes detailed steps that will be taken to ensure the safety of cadets at sea. While we understand the importance of a timely graduation for USMMA cadets, the safety of those same cadets should be your top concern. We stand ready to assist the Department in ensuring a complete educational experience and a timely graduation."

ITF: Maritime Must Be Safe for Women

The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), to which the SIU is affiliated, recently weighed in on the maritime industry's increased efforts to ensure safe workplaces.

In early November, the federation issued a statement that read in part: "A brave female cadet recently published the horrific experiences of sexual assault she endured on board a vessel while attending the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy. The incident and response she details brings shame on the shipping industry and underlines the urgent need for action to eliminate violence in the workplace.

"Eliminating violence in the workplace requires action from employers, employees, and governments, since it is everyone's responsibility to ensure the safety and security of seafarers, including women seafarers.

"In her online post the cadet revealed the full horror of the incident that occurred on board a Maersk Line vessel while she was serving her year at sea in 2019. Going public prompted an independent inquiry from A.P. Moller-Maersk, and investigations by the Maritime Administration of the U.S. federal Department of Transportation.

"But we cannot leave it there. Policies need action."

Lena Dyring, women's representative from the ITF Seafarers' Section, stated, "Sadly, this is not an isolated incident, but a reality for many seafarers, both male and female, regardless of flag or company. We know that women's experiences in the shipping industry, ashore and at sea often do not match the best intentions laid out in policies. Although many women seafarer trainees have great support during their education ashore, including as part of mentoring programs, it is an all-too-common experience that too many women seafarers suffer from harassment and bullying. Too many encounter discrimination in the workplace, and in the worst cases, assault."

Dyring said everyone in maritime has a responsibility to change the male-dominated culture and remove obstacles and barriers faced by women in the industry. Dyring also revealed that following a recent publication of an ITF statement condemning an assault on a female ITF inspector, she received a letter from a

woman seafarer that contained a strong message to the industry "that is worth amplifying."

In the letter, the seafarer argues that "violence is NOT the only reason why the maritime industry cannot retain more women." She suggests that it can be more difficult for women to advance their careers.

Dyring said, "She is absolutely right that positive contribution of women at sea need to be celebrated and profiled. Together, we can make a career at sea safe. We can make it a secure place for everyone, including women, so that all seafarers can progress and achieve their full potential."

In 2020, women made up 1.28% of the overall global seafaring workforce.

The ITF will soon be publishing its own support materials for women seafarers, and will be specifically including guidance on seafarers' rights to safe, healthy and violence-free workplaces.



ABOARD USNS MIGUEL KEITH – CIVMARS and union officials are pictured earlier this year on the West Coast. SIU VP Nick Celona is third from right in the back row. SIU Asst. VP Joe Vincenzo is standing at far right, while SIU Representative Jesse Ruth is standing second from left.

At Sea and Ashore with the SIU



ABOARD USNS BYRD – CIVMAR Tommy Chin (right in photo at left) signs in SIU Government Services Division Representative Jesse Ruth. Chin has been with MSC for 52 years. Other crew members (and Ruth) are pictured above.



FOURTH ARM OF DEFENSE – SIU VP Nick Celona (right) meets with members of the 23rd Marine Regiment in San Bruno, California, on Nov. 2. Celona discussed the vital link between the armed forces and the U.S. Merchant Marine. Sgt. Samuel Tena is at left.



ABOARD USNS MERCY – CIVMARS and SIU officials meet aboard the hospital ship in San Diego.



ABOARD USNS GUADALUPE -- In photo at left, SIU CIVMAR (and ship's delegate) Sharon Hill (center) meets with SIU Asst. VP Joe Vincenzo (right) and SIU Representative Jesse Ruth. Additional CIVMARS are pictured directly above, also with the union officials.