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# THE BEACON

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## Members have export manifest rule concerns

*CBP proposed rulemaking doesn't address bulk, short-sea shipping, and other concerns*

Years in the making, U.S. Customs and Border Protection issued its Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on February 10, 2026 that outlines its plans to mandate the electronic filing of the export manifest. In the rulemaking, CBP virtually eliminated post-departure filing, and the agency proposes an initial filing prior to loading cargo on outbound vessels.

Upon review, the Exchange and its members quickly discovered that operational challenges for certain segments of the industry were not addressed as part of the pre-departure filing requirements. Bulk and short-sea shippers in particular, could face serious obstacles.

CBP proposes to mandate the initial filing at least 24 hours prior to loading, which includes bill of lading numbers, cargo quantities, weight, and descriptions, the complete name and address of the shipper and consignee, the estimated scheduled departure date and departure port, and the AES Internal Transaction Number or AES Exemption Statement. The full cargo manifest can follow but must be filed no later than two hours prior to sailing.

"The U.S. has long required that importers file cargo manifests 24 hours prior to loading in foreign ports for most cargo, and other countries have adopted similar practices," said Exchange Chief Administrative Officer

Michael Fink. "In theory, shippers representing much of the cargo leaving the U.S. may be able to meet this timetable, but bulk and short-sea carriers face operational and business practice obstacles that will make it extremely difficult to comply."

The Exchange convened a stakeholder meeting in March to review the rule's implications to members' businesses and to help develop comments to the Federal Register notice.

For bulk shipments such as oil and gas, cargo manifests often cannot be finalized until the last minute. While accurate cargo descriptions should be determinable prior to loading, accurate final loaded quantities are not known until the vessel has finished loading.

"On oil tankers, the 'agreed final loaded quantities' do not get finalized until the oil is fully loaded, cargo figures are verified, and shore tank/ship figures are reconciled," said Exchange President George McCarthy. "On other (non-oil) bulk cargo vessels, where loading is often conducted over several days, bills of lading quantities are not confirmed until loading is finished and cargo is verified to be in good condition. Only then is the agreed final quantity then determined as example, via a draft survey."

*continued on page 20*

## Two and a half centuries on Philadelphia's rivers

Those in the maritime trade industry understand the importance of the Delaware River more than most. With some notable exceptions in the last several years, maritime trade has been largely unnoticed in the public consciousness and a river is often perceived as little more than the scenic background of the cities it runs past. As the United States approaches its planned 250th anniversary celebrations, however, it is worth acknowledging that any claimed understanding of the river is incomplete; this body of water that predates the founding of the nation by some 15,000 years has seen and done more than will ever be known. With that said, it is worth remembering at least the river's most recent 250-year history as we approach a national milestone by looking back at other milestones achieved on its banks.

The anniversary being commemorated this year is generally understood to be that of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776 (most historians believe that the document was not actually signed until months later on August 2, 1776). We know, however, that the adoption of the Declaration did not constitute the end of the war. The countdown from 250 could then just as plausibly



*Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip visited the Liberty Bell during bicentennial celebrations in 1976.*

begin on December 25, 1776 when General George Washington led troops across the Delaware River. The crossing and subsequent attack on the Hessian forces in New Jersey was entirely unexpected, as crossing the river in the middle of night during the dead of winter when there is ice on the river is a significant undertaking even with the technology of today. The victory in Trenton was decisive and the battle is considered a turning point in the war and in the perception of Washington as a hero and leader.

A century after the Revolution, the U.S. celebrated its independence

and 100-year growth on the global stage with the very first World's Fair hosted in the United States. The event was known as the Centennial Exposition and packaged the celebratory themes of the anniversary into the months-long festivities and spectacle of the World's Fair. Grand works of architecture and art were commissioned and displayed at the fair along with new innovations in science and technology, such as Alexander Graham Bell's new telephone. The right hand and torch of the Statue of Liberty was even loaned to the Exposition where visitors climbed up

*continued on page 9*

*Interview with*

### LTC Ryan A. Baum

District Commander  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
Philadelphia District



*LTC Ryan A. Baum took command of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Philadelphia District on July 16, 2025. He oversees a 500-person workforce responsible for dredging waterways for navigation, protecting communities from flooding and coastal storms, responding to natural and declared disasters, regulating construction in the nation's waters and wetlands, and several other critical missions. Most recently, he served as the deputy engineering division chief for the U.S. Army Intelligence and Security Command, Fort Belvoir, Virginia. LTC Baum took time to share his thoughts with The Beacon on the status and importance of the Corps' mission on the Delaware River.*

**Q: Please tell us a little about your background and how it has affected your approach to operations since assuming command.**

**A:** I have spent most of my career in the conventional Army, developing teams to fight and win. Regardless of the objective—whether it is securing a hilltop or maintaining a navigational channel—at the heart of every mission is teamwork. Teamwork takes time; it requires building trust among members and nurturing partnerships to achieve true cohesion. Over time, a team is forged by working hard together to accomplish difficult tasks. This experience has shaped my approach to operations, emphasizing the importance of collaboration, perseverance, and mutual support in achieving success.

*continued on page 21*



## They that go down to the sea in ships

During yet another regional situation affecting global shipping, it seems right to take a moment to recognize those caught in the middle, seafarers. Currently, there are approximately 1.89 million seafarers serving on over 74,000 vessels involved in global trade. As of this writing, around 600 vessels remain stuck, awaiting safe transit through the Strait of Hormuz, directly affecting the lives and families of approximately 19,000 sailors of various nationalities. While a career at sea is not necessarily the glamorous life portrayed by movies or sea stories, it remains an honorable living upon which the world depends in one form or another. Seafarer welfare is thus paramount to global trade.

Since the start of the U.S.-Iran war, 22 ships have been attacked in the Strait of Hormuz with continuing incidents of drone strikes and gunfire. The International Maritime Organization (IMO), the specialized agency of the United Nations

responsible for measures to improve the safety and security of international shipping, recently stated that there is “no precedent for seafarers caught in a war zone in post-World War II era.” Globally, over 400,000 seafarers remain at sea despite having completed their contracted term, in no small part due to the domino effect of vessels stuck in the Middle East.

The International Transport Workers’ Federation, an IMO partner that represents seafarers, said it receives more than 1,000 emails weekly from crew stranded on ships, voicing concern about on-board conditions and asking for repatriation to their home countries.

### Sanctions and Tariffs

Sanctions and Tariffs have already added a new layer of concern for seafarers. Illegal efforts to avoid sanctions and tariffs have resulted in an increase in evasion networks, including so-called shadow fleets and opaque ownership structures, all of which have only served to increase the vulnerability of seafarers.

### Supporting Networks

While there are many global legal networks working to protect seafarers such as The Maritime Labor Convention (MLC) which sets the minimum standards for the work and shipboard lives of seafarers, no maritime port should underestimate the value of the front line support networks via the various missions to seafarer organizations. One such global network is The

Seafarer’s Charity, the world’s largest independent grant-maker dedicated to maritime welfare. Founded in 1917 and still independent of government or commercial interests, The Seafarer’s Charity is the world’s largest independent grant-maker dedicated to maritime welfare. Its history, scale and mission, makes it unique to deliver impact for seafarers globally. In 2025, it helped more than 400,000 seafarers and their families across merchant shipping, fishing fleets and maritime communities worldwide.

Closer to home are more direct ways we can all help such as the Seaman’s Church Institute and Seamen’s Center of Wilmington, both providing a home away from home to any seafarer. Please take a moment to read the Seamen’s Center article on [page 16](#).

While a career at sea is in fact very exciting and rewarding, saying goodbye to one’s family network and missing family events for months at time, remains the toughest part even during normal trade. Organizations that serve the human side of seafarers become even more crucial during times of global upheaval. Next time shopping, we should take a reflective moment to thank the seafarers that work to make our lives better at the expense of theirs.

*George E. McCarthy*

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## NMFS reconsiders right whale restrictions

The National Marine Fisheries Service is considering modernizing seasonal right whale restrictions and the development of alternative vessel strike-reduction programs. The March 4, 2026 advance notice of proposed rulemaking is an about face from the last proposal in which the agency sought to add additional restrictions to the existing statute.

The existing speed rule requires most vessels equal to or greater than 65 feet in length to transit at speeds of 10 knots or less in designated Seasonal Management Areas during certain times of the year.

On August 1, 2022, the NMFS sought to further reduce the likelihood of whale strikes by expanding the size class of regulated vessels subject to speed restrictions, enlarging the boundaries and extending the timing of seasonal speed zones, and introducing mandatory dynamic speed zones when right whales were known to be present outside of active seasonal zones.

The inclusion of smaller vessels was of particular concern to local mariners. NMFS proposed to include vessels 35 feet in length or larger, which would have included pilot launches

and other smaller craft. Limiting pilot launches to the speed restriction would have resulted in serious navigational, safety, and downstream commerce consequences.

After immense pressure from industry, NMFS withdrew that proposal on January 16, 2025.

In the latest rule, NMFS announced it is seeking data or analysis on the correlation between vessel size and draft on strike risk, information on using dynamic approaches for speed zones based on whale detections, recommendations for updating the speed rule safety deviation provision, and economic consequences of the speed rule.

As part of an ongoing partnership with The MITRE Corporation, NMFS recently released a Technology Readiness Level report, which assesses the maturity level of technology in relation to vessel collision avoidance. The report provides recommendations based on the following technologies: passive acoustic monitoring, crewed aerial surveys, thermal/infrared imaging, visual wavelength optical imaging, very high-resolution optical satellite imaging, active acoustic sensing, radar, light detection and ranging, tagging,

environmental DNA, and in situ dimethyl sulfide measurements. The report ranked real-time passive acoustic monitoring, crewed aerial surveys, and thermal/infrared imaging highest in potential whale detection and collision avoidance potential.

NMFS seeks comments, especially technical information following the Technology Readiness Level framework listed in the MITRE report, on the readiness of technologies to effectively reduce vessel strikes. The TRL Framework ranges from 1 to 9 and follows the development process from basic research (TRL 1) to full operational use (TRL 9).

In addition to technology recommendations and review, the agency also seeks information on using dynamic approaches for speed zones based on whale detections and quantifiable data on the economic consequences of the existing speed rule and potential economic impacts of technology adoption, including those discussed in the MITRE report.

NMFS also requests recommendations for updating the speed rule safety deviation provision to provide greater flexibility for vessel operators as the 10



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knot speed restriction poses potential safety risks such as swamping, capsizing, or loss of steerage on smaller vessels in open ocean conditions or adverse weather.

The Exchange is a proponent of technological solutions over blanket restrictions and commends NMFS for opening the door to a thoughtful discussion of alternate methodology to help protect these endangered whales.

Comments on the advance notice of proposed rulemaking are due by June 2, 2026.

## Del. River regular diverts in heroic rescue of sailor of the coast of Bermuda

Many mariners on the Delaware River are familiar with the name "Bermuda Islander," as the vessel makes weekly voyages moving cargo from Bermuda to Salem, New Jersey, and back, but many may not know that in February, the vessel performed a rescue approximately 115 miles off the coast of Bermuda. The cargo vessel is operated by Bermuda International Shipping Ltd., which is owned by a

consortium of private investors, mostly from Bermuda.

On February 10, 2026, the crew responded to a distress call from the sailing yacht, "Alcyon Blue," while enroute to the Delaware River, rescuing solo sailor Demetris Lappas, before continuing its journey to New Jersey.

According to the Bermuda Department of Marine & Ports Services, Mr. Lappas first notified the Bermuda

Maritime Operations Centre via email on February 7 that the yacht was experiencing deteriorating weather conditions and had suffered a loss of electrical power due to engine and generator failure. Further communication, the next day to his family, indicated that the vessel had sustained sail damage and that Mr. Lappas was dizzy and nauseous due to diesel fumes in the cabin, prompting him to activate his distress beacon.

Two vessels, the "Logos Hope" and the "Bermuda Islander," responded to the scene with the latter arriving first with her crew of nine in the early morning hours of February 10, 2026. Given the rough weather conditions, the captain of the "Bermuda Islander" deemed it appropriate to wait until the arrival of the "Logos Hope" before attempting rescue.

After daybreak, both vessels maneuvered alongside the "Alcyon

Blue," with the crew of the "Bermuda Islander" able to safely transfer Mr. Lappas onboard several hours later. After assessing Mr. Lappas' condition and determining he did not sustain life-threatening injuries, the "Bermuda Islander" returned to Bermuda so Mr. Lappas could receive further care before the vessel resumed its voyage to Salem.

George Butterfield, the vice-president of Meyer Shipping, one of the consortium investors, was quoted as saying this about the incident: "The Safety of Life at Sea Convention requires captains to proceed at maximum speed and assist persons in distress, regardless of nationality or status. This obligation stems from longstanding maritime tradition as well as a legal responsibility."

Bravo Zulu to the captain and crew of the "Bermuda Islander."

### Exchange Operations Manager Laura Miller Recognized by Coast Guard Captain of the Port



On March 12, 2026, Maritime Exchange Operations Manager Laura Miller (right) was recognized by Coast Guard Sector Delaware Bay Captain of the Port Kate F. Higgins-Bloom, for her unwavering commitment and outstanding support during Operation Deep Freeze 2026. Laura provided valuable insight and guidance as part of the Incident Management Team to help mitigate worst case scenarios due to historic below freezing temperatures impacting the Marine Transportation System.



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## What the tariff ruling means and how the refund process works

As many Exchange members are aware, on February 20, 2026, the Supreme Court ruled in *Learning Resources, Inc. v. Trump* that President Trump could not use the International Emergency Economic Power Act to impose broad tariffs on foreign imports. Earlier, the Court of International Trade (CIT) had also blocked the tariffs. This has left questions about collected fees and potential refunds.

The ruling, however, did not address whether or how the federal government should refund importers who already paid tariffs. Further, it did not affect tariffs under Sections 122, 232, or 301, and was limited to those issued under IEEPA.

With the refund question still up in the air, the issue returned to the Court of International Trade, where a March 4, 2026 ruling directed the federal government to refund previously paid IEEPA tariffs with interest immediately. Customs and Border Protection responded to the order, saying it could not comply, which caused the judge in the case to pause his ruling on March 6, 2026.

In a separate ruling on April 7, 2026, the CIT directed CBP to liquidate IEEPA entries without regard to those duties and to reliquidate entries for which liquidation is not final. The court, however, suspended this order insofar as it required immediate compliance.

Accordingly, CBP developed the new Consolidated Automated Payment Engine (CAPE) system and, on April 10, 2026, issued a notice to trade introducing the system and outlining a basic

concept for refunds. Further, CBP confirmed this in court documents filed on April 14, 2026.

The CAPE system will consolidate multiple claims into a single electronic payment for importers, aligning with the agency's notice that as of February 6, 2026, CBP will no longer issue paper checks, and all refunds will be processed electronically through the Automated Commercial Environment (ACE) portal.

According to CBP guidance, those seeking refunds must use an ACE account. The CAPE process begins when the Importer of Record or their authorized broker files the CAPE Declaration in the ACE Portal. After submission, CBP removes the IEEPA Harmonized Tariff Schedule number, recalculates duties without IEEPA, and updates the entry to a new version. CBP then reviews the revised entry and proceeds to liquidate or reliquidate it. Refunds are consolidated by Importer of Record (IOR) or the party designated on CBP Form 4811 according to the liquidation date.

Additional guidance issued by CBP on April 12, 2026, provided detailed information regarding the refund process, protests, and ACH payments, and indicated a 60-90 day timeframe for refunds. The CAPE system went live on April 20, 2026, with CBP issuing another notice notifying industry that the system was active and provided dates for support calls it hosted to answer questions. For more information please see the CBP IEEPA refunds site.

# Bowman

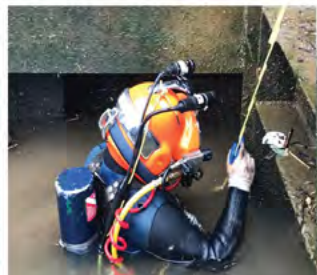
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# Go Phish! Social engineering in the AI age

*Staying safe in an increasingly sophisticated online landscape*

The term “AI” has found its way into nearly every professional sphere over the last few years, but it is far more than just another corporate buzzword. Artificial intelligence is actively changing how we work—particularly how we process and optimize data. This transformation is especially significant in the realm of cybersecurity, and more specifically in relation to the social-engineering tactic known as phishing.

Phishing itself is not a new concept. In fact, scammers have been using phishing techniques for more than 30 years. One of the earliest notable examples occurred in the mid-1990s, when attackers posed as America Online (AOL) employees. By impersonating trusted representatives, they tricked users into revealing sensitive information, allowing scammers to access the internet for free.

While the specific goals of phishing campaigns evolve over time, the underlying principles remain the same. Scammers assume a false identity and present a fabricated premise in the hope of convincing users to voluntarily dis-

close sensitive information.

So how does AI change the game for phishing?

The answer is largely optimization.

Historically, phishing attempts were often relatively easy to identify due to linguistic and grammatical errors. These mistakes frequently served as tell-tale signs, particularly because phishing campaigns commonly crossed international borders.

Today, however, just as business professionals use generative AI tools such as ChatGPT to proof-read and refine their work, phishing scammers can do the same. Modern AI systems enable attackers to produce communications that are polished, professional, and convincing.

Although generative AI programs include security protocols—often referred to as guardrails—designed to prevent malicious use, it is extremely difficult for developers to fully restrict how bad actors employ these tools. AI systems cannot reliably determine intent behind seemingly innocent prompts, such as, “Help me write an email to the

finance department at a company requesting payment for an overdue invoice.” Rather than struggling to draft a credible message themselves, scammers can rely on AI to do the work for them.

Beyond basic email generation, AI can also be used in conjunction with publicly available information from platforms like LinkedIn to create highly customized, targeted messages—even when the scammer and the victim speak different languages. While these examples only scratch the surface of AI’s capabilities, the potential danger is undeniable.

This naturally leads to an important question: How can professionals protect themselves from being “hooked” by a phishing attack?

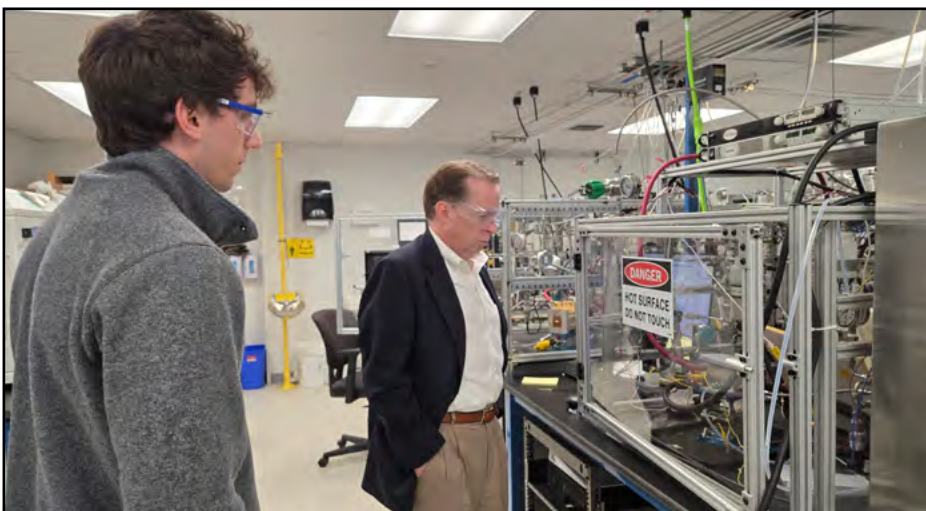
Despite the increasing sophis-

tication of phishing attempts, the fundamentals of safe online behavior remain effective. Users should continue to apply heightened scrutiny to unexpected messages, particularly those that rely on urgency or pressure tactics. Additionally, never click on links and never open attachments when a communication appears suspicious.

When in doubt, always contact your organization’s information security officer or IT department before engaging with a questionable message.

AI has the potential to be a powerful ally in productivity—or a serious liability—depending on how it is used. The difference lies in awareness and vigilance. Don’t let yourself become the victim that takes the bait and gets phished.

## Exchange Gets the Latest on Clean Hydrogen



Exchange President Capt. George E. McCarthy and Chief Administrative Officer Michael Fink visited the University of Delaware’s Center for Clean Hydrogen in April. Dr. Anil Bika, Dr. Ke Gong, Dr. Karen Meidlinger, and Dr. Ajay Prasad provided an overview and progress of the team’s mission to create, build, and nurture clean hydrogen technologies. Shown here, Capt. McCarthy is getting a tour of the Center’s test lab in which hydrogen is being produced at a small scale to test and improve efficiencies.

In 2023, the Delaware River region was designated one of several Regional Clean Hydrogen Hubs by the U.S. Department of Energy. The Mid-Atlantic Clean Hydrogen Hub, or MACH2, ranked among the most pro-labor and greenest hubs in the nation.

Under the DOE model, a regional clean energy hub encompasses a network of hydrogen producers, consumers, and local connective infrastructure that supports the production, storage, delivery, and end-use of clean hydrogen. A total of \$7 billion was made available nationwide through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021.

# Exchange 2025 annual report outlines successes and challenges

Following is the Report of the Board of Directors delivered by Chairman John Reynolds at the Exchange's 151st Annual Meeting on March 11, 2026.

The Exchange is pleased to report that despite a tumultuous and uncertain world economy due in large part to sweeping American tariffs and vessel fees, Delaware River ports and the Exchange fared well. Under the leadership of Capt. George E. McCarthy, who finished his first year at the helm, the Exchange weathered the storm and guided the team through another successful year.

By early reports, the U.S. economy grew 2.3% to 2.7% despite tariff-related trade wars, but unemployment grew to 4.4%. Excluding volatile food and energy, core inflation fell to 2.6%, but food, housing, and energy prices remained high for consumers. Delaware River traffic increased by one vessel compared to the previous year, total tonnage decreased by one point one percent (1.1%), and cargo value decreased by less than half a percent. Given the uncertain market, fluctuating fees, and other challenges, the decline could have been much more significant.

But the Exchange did have something to look forward to. The staff organized a celebration for the organization's 150th anniversary that will soon not be forgotten. With historical displays and live music as a backdrop, over 230 members and friends of the port came together in May to commemorate a century and a half of continual service to the port.

The Exchange continued its mission throughout 2025 to protect and promote the commercial maritime industry, and the following are some of the year's highlights and accomplishments.

## ADVOCACY/PUBLIC POLICY

### Tariffs Dominate the News

**The Roller Coaster Tariff Ride** – Under the authority of the 1977 International Emergency Economic Powers Act, President Trump very quickly

set the tone for the year by implementing a 25% tariff on Mexico and Canada, and an additional 10% tariff on China. Shortly thereafter, he reinstated and expanded the section 232 tariffs on imported steel and aluminum, ending all country exemptions. In April, the President went global by imposing a minimum 10% tariff on all goods entering the U.S., as well as country-specific reciprocal tariffs ranging from 11% to 50%.

Throughout the rest of the year, the Administration threatened and/or implemented sweeping and, in many cases, very substantial tariffs on virtually every country in the world. On August 1, the President announced sweeping reciprocal tariffs on dozens of countries ranging from 10% to 41%, with India and Brazil temporarily facing 50% duties. In turn, trading partners implemented their own retaliatory fees, which, in some cases, forced the President to reverse or mitigate some decisions.

**Battle with High-Volume Traders** – Tariff rates with four of the U.S.'s largest trading partners, China, Canada, Mexico, and the European Union, fluctuated rapidly as potential trade deals were discussed, implemented, or deferred. China and the U.S. fought a bitter trade war with tariffs rising to 145% on Chinese goods into the U.S., and 125% on U.S. goods into China before finally lowering to 30% and 10%, respectively. After fluctuating rates and some product exceptions, Canadian imports leveled off at 35%, Mexico at 25%, and EU rates at 15%, except for steel and aluminum.

**South Korea Deal Reached** – The U.S. and South Korea reached a trade deal to keep reciprocal tariffs on both sides at 15% and lower fees on autos and car parts. In return, South Korea agreed to invest \$350 billion in the U.S., including \$200 billion in cash investment. Of note to the Delaware River region, South Korea also agreed to invest \$150

billion in American shipbuilding, which places the Philly Shipyard in an advantageous position, as you will see later in this report.

**Tariffs Challenged in the Courts** – Several States challenged the legality of the President to levy worldwide tariffs, which they argue far exceed his authority under the Emergency Economic Powers Act. The U.S. Court of International Trade issued a decision on May 28 to block the tariffs, but a federal appeals court stayed the decision while the proceedings played out. The ultimate decision was made by the Supreme Court, which rendered a decision this year on February 20, 2026, deciding that President Trump exceeded his authority under the Emergency Economic Powers Act to impose worldwide tariffs.

**Steel and Aluminum Targeted** – In an effort to bring manufacturing and production back to America, President Trump increased Section 232 tariffs on imported steel and aluminum to 50% for most countries except the United Kingdom, which is subject to a 25% rate, and Russia which was penalized with a 200% tariff. These tariffs are not based on the Emergency Powers Act nor are they included in the recent Supreme Court decision and therefore will remain in place.

**New Fees on Chinese-Built Ships and Equipment** – On October 14, the United States Trade Representative implemented fees on Chinese-built and operated vessels arriving in the U.S on a tonnage capacity basis starting at \$50/net tonnage, with annual increases through 2028 to \$140/net tonnage capacity. The USTR also imposed a \$150/vehicle fee on foreign-built vehicle carriers. China reciprocated with its own fees, but both countries agreed to suspend the fees for one year on November 10, 2025, while negotiations continue.

*continued next page*



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## Exchange report of the board

*continued from previous page*

**Century-long Provision Comes to an End** – Through an Executive Order, President Trump ended de minimis exemptions in August for all shipments entering the United States. The exemption, a provision on the books since the 1930s, had allowed imports valued at less than \$800 into the country duty-free.

The Administration already ended de minimis exemptions from China and Hong Kong in May, but the new decision expanded that ruling to all countries. Many postal services across the globe suspended service to the U.S. temporarily while they adjusted systems to manage the change.

### Maritime Dominance High on Legislative Agenda

**Ship for America Act Reintroduced** – Legislators reintroduced the Shipbuilding and Harbor Infrastructure for Prosperity and Security (SHIPS) for America Act in April. With some changes to the original 2024 version, it calls for a Maritime Security Advisor to coordinate national maritime affairs and policy, the creation of a Maritime Security Trust Fund, a target of adding 250 ships to the U.S.-flag international fleet within a decade, an increase shipbuilding and ship repairs in the U.S., and growth of the U.S. maritime workforce by investing in the merchant maritime academies and retention and training programs.

While the Exchange supported the intent of the bill, the proposed funding mechanism of charging USTR penalties on Chinese-built and operated ships and a new tonnage tax was a concern.

**President Puts Focus on Maritime** – On April 9, 2025, President Trump issued an Executive Order with the goal of restoring America's maritime dominance. Many of the measures echo provisions in the Kelly-Waltz SHIPS for America Act. The

EO includes several measures aimed at revitalizing the U.S. shipbuilding industry and preventing countries that have been circumventing the Harbor Maintenance Tax by shipping merchandise to the U.S. through Mexico and Canada land borders.

**South Korea Agrees to Shipbuilding Deal** – As part of a bilateral trade deal made with the U.S., South Korea agreed to invest \$150 billion in the U.S. shipbuilding industry. The deal, which includes the construction of new commercial and naval vessels, is part of a \$350bn investment package in semiconductors, EV batteries, biotech, and clean energy.

### Shipbuilding Has a Bright Future in Philadelphia

**Philly Shipyard to Expand** – Hanwha Group announced that it intends to invest \$5 billion in Philly Shipyard to expand it by adding two docks and three quays. The expansion is part of a push to bolster American shipbuilding and is projected to increase the shipyard's annual output from two vessels to as many as 20. Hanwha also ordered 10 mid-sized tankers from the shipyard.

**Rhoads Invests \$100M in Philadelphia Navy Yard** – Rhoads Industries recently invested \$100 million in the Philadelphia Navy Yard to expand its operations, including a planned doubling of its capacity intended to bolster the U.S. Navy's submarine program. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, under Governor Josh Shapiro, will invest \$4 million to support the expansion effort.

**U.S.-Flagged LNG Carrier Built Jointly by Hanwha Geoje and Hanwha Philly** – Hanwha will jointly build a Liquefied Natural Gas carrier between its shipyards in Geoje, South Korea, and Philadelphia. Though Hanwha will complete much of the construction in South Korea, it will finish the Coast Guard certification at the Philadelphia shipyard to comply with the U.S. Trade Representative's requirement that 1% of U.S. LNG exports be

transported by U.S.-flagged and crewed vessels beginning April 2028.

**Training Ship Builds Continue** – Hanwha Philly Shipyard launched the "Lone Star State," the fourth training ship under the MARAD National Security Multi-Mission Vessel program, in January 2025. Two months later, it celebrated the keel laying of the fifth and final vessel in the program, the "Golden State." In August, MARAD christened the "State of Maine," the third vessel, which was destined for the Maine Maritime Academy.

### Fruit Import Challenges

**Court Blocks Chilean Grape Systems Approach** – After decades of work between the USDA and Chile, the first organic table grapes approved under the Systems Approach arrived in the U.S. in April 2025. Despite the program's success during the latter part of the 2024-2025 season, a U.S. district court judge reversed the USDA decision, siding with California grape grower associations, and halted the systems approach in October 2025 just prior to the next season.

At the urging of the Exchange and other stakeholders, the USDA challenged the court's decision and requested a stay while the appeal process plays out. The stay was not granted, and Chilean growers and shippers were forced to revert to pre-systems approach methodologies.

**Chilean Inspectors Denied Access** – The Exchange was made aware of reports from importers that B1 Visas for quality control inspectors from Chile were being withheld by the U.S. Embassy in Chile. Typically, these workers stay for 4-5 months in the U.S. to perform quality control inspections on the Chilean fruit that arrives in our port. The Exchange and the Chilean & American Chamber of Commerce worked together to identify a solution.

*continued on page 15*

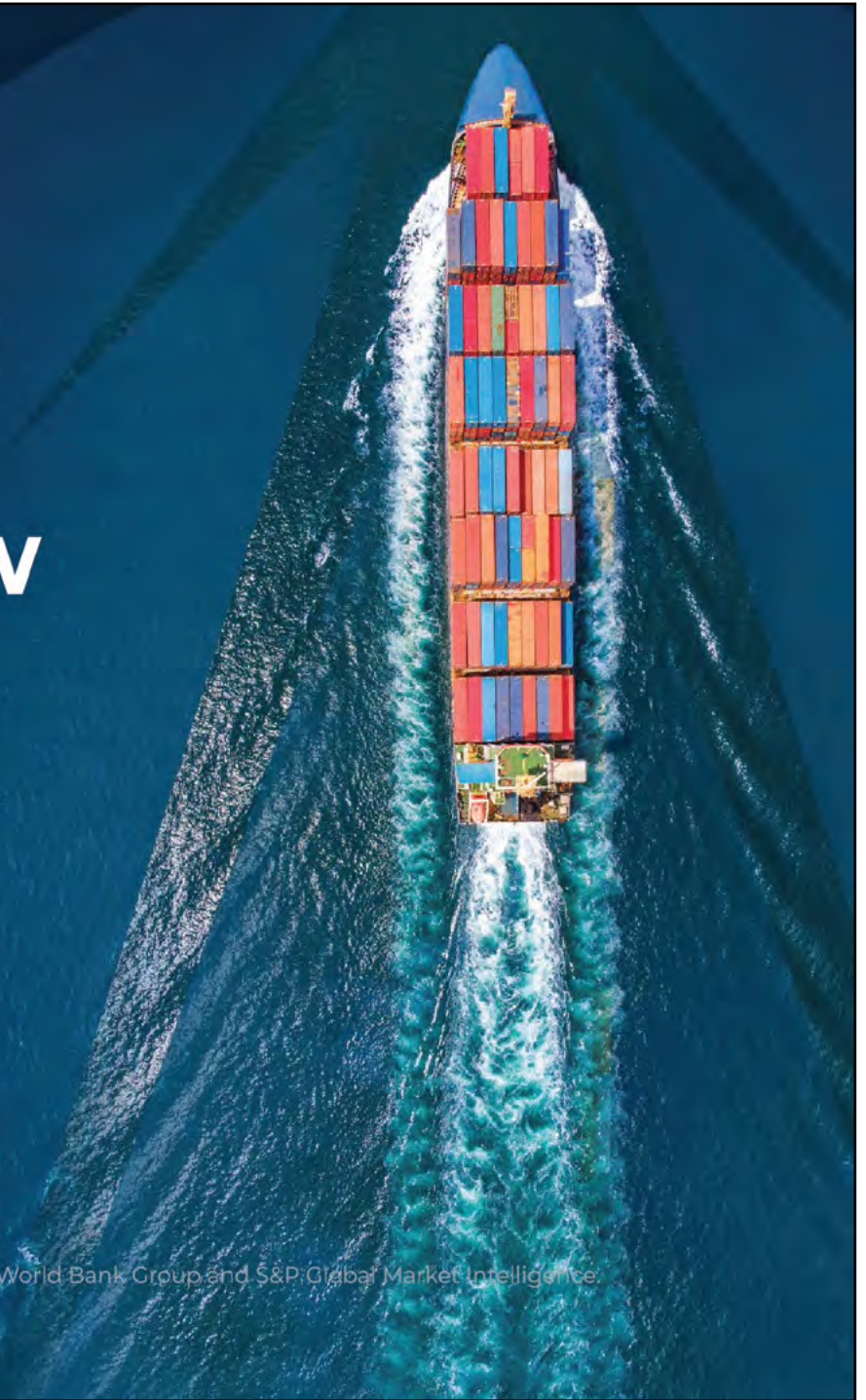
# Ranked #1 Most Productive Port in North America Two Years in a Row

This recognition reflects the dedication of everyone who keeps the port moving — from the men and women of the on the front lines at PhilaPort's Packer Avenue Marine Terminal to our carriers, logistics teams, and partners across the region.

Thank you to our entire port community for helping Philadelphia lead the way once again.



\*According to the 2024 Container Port Performance Index (CPPI) released by the World Bank Group and S&P Global Market Intelligence.



# Assistant Secretary of the Army announces transformation initiative for Civil Works program

On February 23, 2026, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works Adam R. Telle announced a major initiative, “Building Infrastructure, Not Paperwork,” for the Army’s Civil Works program.

“Building Infrastructure, Not Paperwork” will provide greater focus on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ core Civil Works missions while minimizing non-core programs, direct funding to priority water resources projects that will provide the greatest benefits to the nation, shorten permitting timelines, and reduce or eliminate extraneous regulations and paperwork that slow USACE’s delivery of Civil Works projects and programs.

“President Trump has empowered his administration to work with lightspeed efficiency to make our government deliver more for all Americans,” said Telle. “The Army Civil Works’ ‘Building Infrastructure, Not Paperwork’ initiative will enable the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to deliver critical projects and programs for the nation more efficiently, sooner, and at less cost than the current ways of doing business. This will eliminate bureaucratic delays and provide fast, clear decisions needed to save lives and empower our economy.”

The initiative will enable USACE district commanders around the nation to execute the Civil

Works projects and programs that benefit the nation. USACE commanders will be empowered to take informed risks in advancing critical water resources projects and programs to completion faster and at less cost. The policy changes will also bring greater transparency and accountability for the program to the American public, project partners and sponsors, industry, and the elected leaders who make the annual funding decisions for the Civil Works program.

The plan consists of 27 initiatives grouped under five categories: Maximizing the Ability to Deliver National Infrastructure, Cutting Red Tape, Focus on Efficiency, Transparency & Accountability, and Prioritization.

The initiatives do not affect USACE execution of its emergency response support to natural and manmade disasters.

### Opportunities for the USACE Philadelphia District

Several of the plan’s initiatives involve improving dredging capacity and efficiency. USACE will work with Endangered Species Act resource agencies to significantly expand the seasonal windows for dredging activities. USACE will also be considering innovative solutions to improve the science of environmental window mitigation measures.

Executing the plan will result in better, more efficient use of the U.S. dredging fleet, expanding availability, reducing cost to the American taxpayer, and removing artificial constraints on the economy.

“Maintenance dredging is a vital part of maintaining safe navigation on our waterways. This enables maritime commerce to flow and supports national security activities,” said Lt. Col. Ryan Baum, commander of the USACE Philadelphia District. “We maintain about 500 miles of navigation channels in our District alone, and we maintain dune and beach fill projects for Coastal Storm Risk Management along about 100 miles of Delaware and New Jersey coastline. We’re laser focused on working with our partners at the federal, state, and local levels to improve how we deliver these important projects. This new initiative will enable our District to find more efficient ways to deliver our critically important navigation mission, our Coastal Storm Risk Management work, and the many other missions that we are responsible for in the region.”

Within its navigable waterways, the Philadelphia District maintains the 45-foot-deep Delaware River federal navigation channel from Philadelphia to the Atlantic. The district also operates and maintains the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal. Other navigation projects include the Schuylkill River, Wilmington Harbor, the New Jersey Intracoastal Waterway, and several coastal inlets. These channels are critical to maritime commerce and activities including the international transport of goods, U.S. Coast Guard operations, and the commercial fishing industry. This new initiative will enable more efficient execution for both navigation and Coastal Storm Risk Management projects.

Baum added that the ongoing construction of the “Donnelly,” a medium class hopper dredge that is estimated for delivery in late 2027, will align with the “Building Infrastructure, Not Paperwork” dredging-related initiatives. The “Donnelly” will be based in Philadelphia and play a critical role in providing safe, reliable, effective, and environmentally sustainable waterborne transportation systems for vital national security, commerce, and recreation needs.

The “Building Infrastructure, Not Paperwork” initiative will also have a major impact on streamlining and improving efficiency in permitting. The USACE Philadelphia District regulates essentially all construction activities in waters of the United States across Delaware and portions of New Jersey and Pennsylvania. The initiative will provide for more consistency, improve timeliness, and remove subjectivity in decisions by providing tools and technology while adhering to the law.

## Exchange Joins AAPA Conference Delegation to Meet with Key Legislators



As part of the American Association of Port Authority’s 2026 Legislative Summit in Washington D.C. representatives from ports across the country met with federal legislators and their staff to advocate for the most important issues facing the world of maritime trade. Pictured here, a delegation of representatives from ports of the mid-Atlantic region, including Exchange members and staff, held a productive meeting with Senator Andy Kim (D-NJ).

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# From the Archives Maritime Exchange Marks 100 Years

Originally Published in the Philadelphia Inquirer, May 8, 1975; Written by Gerald McKelvey

No doubt about it, Philadelphia was heading for the skids.

"In the early history of the United States," said ship owner William Brockie, "Philadelphia was the first commercial city of the continent... her reputation as a port of entry unexcelled."

Then, Brockie dropped the other shoe: "Today, with immeasurably increased advantages... Philadelphia does not occupy the same commercial preeminence she once possessed..."

Brockie made his glum assessment in 1875, just as the city was starting to slip behind New York as America's major East Coast port of entry.

Part of the problem was simply a matter of geography. New York lay dead at the end of the North Atlantic shipping lanes, almost a straight sail from Britain to the continent. Philadelphia, alas, lay several days sailing to the south, and 90 miles inland, up a winding river.

About that, Brockie could do nothing.

But he was determined not to let New York take the shipping trade in a cakewalk. So he asked "a few of us who are interested in the shipping, importing and exporting trade" to overlook their natural rivalries and band together for the common good of boosting the port of Philadelphia.

Well, Philadelphia never surpassed New York as America's major port of entry (she is still number two) but Brockie's association of "a few of us who are interested," the Maritime Exchange, celebrates its 100th anniversary today.

Mayor Frank L. Rizzo has declared it "Philadelphia Maritime Exchange Centennial Day" and the festivities will be highlighted with an invitation-only dinner at the Down Town Club.

The 211 current members of the exchange represent about every business or profession allied to Philadelphia's maritime industry, an industry that (according to oft-quoted and never-denied figures) employs one of every three workers in the metropolitan region's workforce and pays annual wages estimated in excess of \$2 billion. The commerce moving through the port is estimated to have a direct economic impact in the region of slightly over a billion dollars annually and an overall impact of more than \$3.5 billion.

When the exchange first started, the Port of Philadelphia meant the docks and wharves along the city's waterfront. Now, the name includes all the river ports on the Delaware, from the bay to Trenton.

The members include steamship agents, tug companies, shippers and maritime lawyers. They are all rivals among themselves, but are all engaged in the same industry.

"Our members are all special interests," said William Harrison, secretary of the exchange, "but they're all interested in the development of the port. The exchange's interest is the entire port."

The exchange's major function is providing information to its members, especially on the arrival and departure of ships in the Delaware. There are two reporting stations, one at Marcus Hook

ered a speech, and led a procession which crossed the bridge into Camden, marking yet another historic presidential crossing of the Delaware River—though a much less fraught one than Washington's original.

America's Bicentennial celebration, while not a World's Fair, was an elaborate and star-studded affair. Philadelphia played host to two major world leaders: President Gerald Ford and Queen Elizabeth II. The visit was only the queen's second ever to the United States. She arrived in the royal yacht "Britannia" with Prince Philip and 45 other guests. The royals were greeted by then Mayor Frank Rizzo and his wife, Carmela. Following a tour of the city, the queen presented as a gift to the city what is known as the "Bicentennial Bell." Cast at the same English foundry as the Liberty Bell, the gift represented

## U.S. celebrates it's 250 year anniversary

continued from page 1

to the balcony of the torch. While this grand event did not take place along the Delaware, it was held very nearby on the banks of its largest tributary, the Schuylkill River.

The nation's 150th anniversary saw an effort to repeat the celebration of 50 years earlier with the Sesquicentennial Exposition. Though ultimately not as grand or as successful as its predecessor, the "Sesqui" did have at least one major lasting contribution in the dedication of the Delaware River Bridge, now called the Benjamin Franklin Bridge. At the time, it was the longest suspension bridge in the world. In July of that year, President Calvin Coolidge visited Philadelphia, deliv-

## MISNA Directors convene at Harbor Safety Conference



Marine exchange executives had a chance to network in March at the National Harbor Safety Conference at which representatives from 29 of the 47 Harbor Safety Committees across the country joined to discuss safety and security challenges facing the Marine Transportation System. In attendance were (l-r) Steve White, Marine Exchange of Alaska; George McCarthy, Maritime Exchange for the Delaware River and Bay; Patrick Gallagher, Marine Exchange of Puget Sound; Kip Louttit, Marine Exchange of Southern California; Matthew Denning, Louisiana Maritime Association; Curtis Cannizzaro, Merchants Exchange of Portland, Oregon; and Stephen Lyman, Maritime Association of the Port of New York/New Jersey.

and the other at the Delaware Capes, and four reporters who handle this detail.

The most senior reporter is Harold Newcomb, who has manned the station at Cape Henlopen for the past 29 years.

The station, perched atop an old coastal defense tower, gives him a view that on a clear day can go as far as Cape May, on the far side of Delaware Bay.

The methods of communication have changed and the ships have changed," said Newcomb, "but the work is still the same, notifying agents that their ships have arrived or left here, and relaying orders to the captains."

The greatest change, said Newcomb, is the use of radio for communicating with ships.

"When I came here, communication was made by a Morse lamp," said Newcomb. "I had been a radioman and knew the code, so the job was an easy one to get into."

Voice radio communication has almost entirely replaced Morse lamps, but Newcomb can still flash out the messages if necessary.

Back in the old days, in William Brockie's time, the ship reporting station was right out in the breakwater in Harbor of Refuge, along with a Western Union office and the Anglo-American Cable service.

The reporting station since has been moved to the mainland and is a snug place on a stormy night (the old reporters frequently feared being washed off the breakwater).

Newcomb says there hasn't been a shipwreck at his station since he's been there. And though he saw a lot of wartime shipping, the biggest incident, the capture of a German submarine in a net that was strung across the cape, happened while he was off duty.

"I heard about that, of course," said Newcomb, "I heard so much about it, I almost think I was here when it happened."

the uniting of America and Great Britain in their shared cause of freedom for all. The bell still hangs at the corner of 3rd and Walnut, just a few blocks south of the Maritime Exchange.

President Ford's speech in front of Independence Hall invoked the lives and legacies of the founding fathers, Abraham Lincoln, and Franklin Roosevelt, all pointing to the ongoing proj-

ect that is America. He emphasized that "Liberty is a living flame to be fed, not dead ashes to be revered, even in a Bicentennial Year." The sentiment underscores an important message, still relevant 50 years later. That freedom, once earned, cannot be taken for granted; that the project of American freedom must always continue forward lest it be lost.



# THE BEACON



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# Looking back at the Bicentennial

With the nation's 250th birthday celebration fast approaching, the Exchange thought it timely to look back at the nation's 200th anniversary celebrations in the region. President Gerald Ford and First Lady Betty Ford presided over ceremonies in Philadelphia, and Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip gifted a new "Independence Bell" on July 4 during their visit. Other visiting dignitaries included King Carl XVI of Sweden, President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing of France, Crown Prince Harald of Norway, and Chancellor Helmut Schmidt of West Germany.

From large cities to rural towns throughout the country, Americans celebrated 200 years of independence, liberty, and democracy. But nowhere were the celebrations so poignant as in the birthplace of American independence.

Happy Semiquincentennial to all!



President Gerald Ford delivers a speech in front of Independence Hall.



Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip disembark from the royal yacht "Britannia."



Philadelphian celebrants march down Benjamin Franklin Parkway celebrating America's Bicentennial.



Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip are greeted by Mayor Frank and Carmela Rizzo at Penn's Landing.

Royal yacht "Britannia."

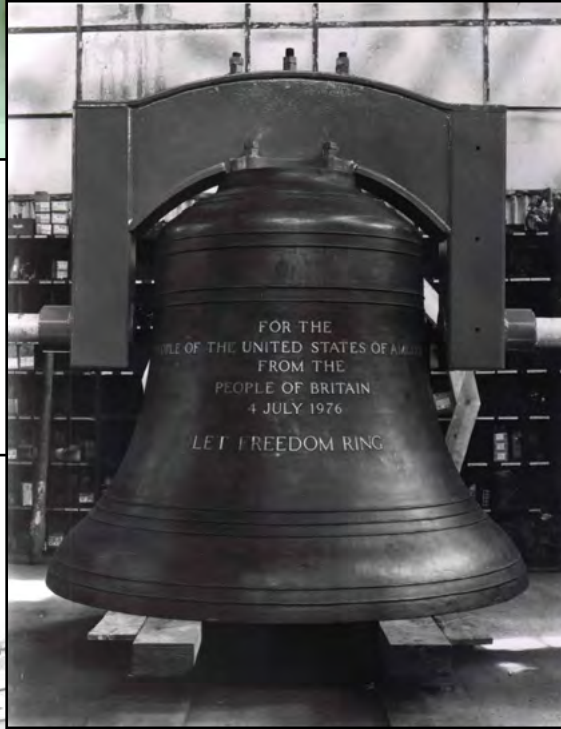


Just prior to the bicentennial celebrations, South Jersey dignitaries visit the "USS Paul" including (l-r) Camden Mayor Angelo Errichetti, Gloucester City Mayor William Gartland, Freeholder William Simon, SJPC Director Isadore Borstein, SJPC Executive Director Robert Pettegrew, and Assistant to Exec. Dir. Michael Conroy.

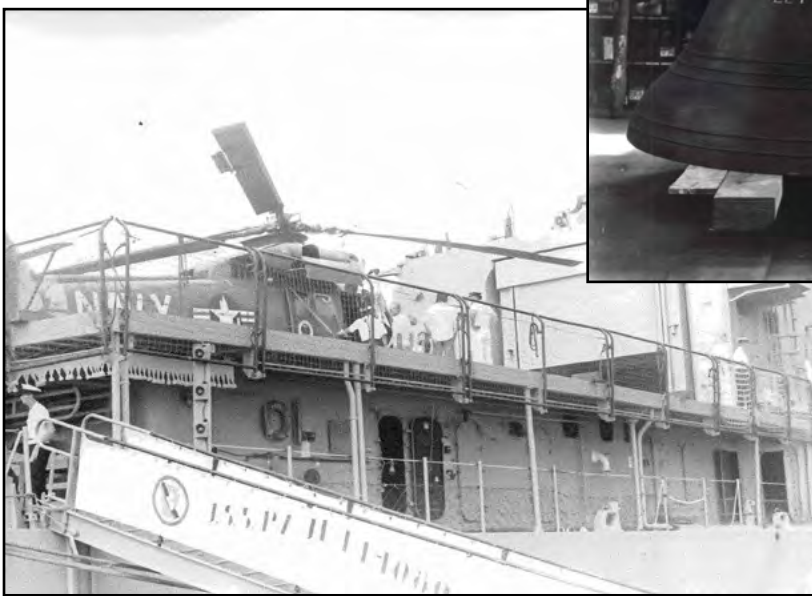


President Gerald Ford aboard naval vessel during bicentennial celebrations.

The Bicentennial Bell, a gift from the people of Great Britain to the people of the United States.



The American Freedom Train began its tour of all 48 contiguous states in Wilmington, Delaware and concluded its journey 21 months later in Miami, Florida.



Bicentennial visitors tour the helicopter aboard the "USS Paul" at Broadway Terminal, South Jersey Ports.



The Exchange's own Michael Fink (left front) (in his younger days) marched in a bicentennial parade in his hometown.

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## In Memoriam



### Linda Greene

The Exchange staff was saddened to hear about the passing of Linda Greene on March 20, 2026.

Linda was a well-known figure amongst the maritime community, known for her volunteer work with the Ports of Philadelphia Maritime Society. Linda also volunteered each year to serve as the teller for the Maritime Exchange's annual election and was one of our Unsung Heroes for 2024.

"I met Linda over 30 years ago when we both handled Imports (she for a local Customs Broker and me for a local Steamship Agency). Her knowledge and pleasant personality made her a joy to work with. Those same attributes continued throughout her career, especially when she accepted the position of Secretary of the Ports of Philadelphia Maritime Society. I'm sure her colleagues at DBRC and her friends at the Maritime Society will miss her terribly. I know I will," said Theresa Penot, formerly of Norton Lilly International.

Colleen Kirk, Treasurer of the Philadelphia Maritime Society, said "Linda's countless hours of dedication and commitment as secretary to the Maritime Society showed her ability to go above and beyond. It was always a pleasure to work alongside Linda. No matter what the task was, she had that way of bringing fun and laughter to the table."

Linda loved summers in Wildwood, New Jersey and was a devoted Eagles and Phillies fan. She took immense pride in her career that spanned over 35 years in International Logistics and later in the Environmental Emergency Response Industry. She will be sorely missed by all those who knew her for the contagious smile, fun-loving personality, and for being a truly genuine friend.

Linda was the beloved wife of 38 years to Todd Greene and loving mother to Dennis McLaughlin, John McLaughlin, Kevin Greene, and Tim Greene.

The world lost a kind and ebullient soul when Linda passed. Our condolences to Linda's family and friends.

## Independence Seaport Museum's new exhibition commemorates America's semiquincentennial

Eager to prove itself worthy of trading on the world stage as a newly formed nation 250 years ago, America—and especially Philadelphians—embarked on the risky venture of trading with China by entrusting private citizens with the work of establishing trade and diplomatic relationships with the Chinese. Merchants saw dramatic opportunities to make money, building some of the fortunes that helped transform Philadelphia into a major port and city. To celebrate the country's 250th anniversary, on March 20, 2026, Independence Seaport Museum (ISM) will open *Seeking Profit and Power: Philadelphia, China Trade, and the Making of America*, a new exhibition informed by the latest scholarship and featuring approximately 150 unique, rarely seen objects from its collection ranging from ship logs and cargo manifests to examples of rare Chinese export porcelain; Chinese silk garments and sample books to portraits of American and Chinese merchants. Some objects in the exhibition will be exhibited for the first time. While other institutions can tell different aspects of this story, ISM is uniquely positioned to share it through its mission and location on the Delaware River, where Philadelphia's China trade vessels launched and their cargo was unloaded. The exhibition will be on view through March 15, 2027.

"This exhibition tells the story of a critical moment in the history of our nation," said Peter S. Seibert, president and CEO of Independence Seaport Museum. "When the United States declared its independence from Great Britain, we also separated ourselves from the rules and regulations that governed overseas trade. As we came together as a nation 250 years ago, we also stepped out on the world stage for the first time. The ISM team, consisting not only of our curatorial, exhibition and education staff and an exceptional panel of outside scholars, has brought together an amazing assemblage of objects that tell the story

of our look to the East as a new global trading power."

Among the vast array of objects that visitors will be able to view in *Seeking Profit and Power* is an exceptionally rare letter carried by Captain John Green, a Philadelphian and former officer of the Continental Navy, which introduces him as a citizen of the United States and requests that he be treated "in a becoming manner" and allowed to do business in China as he saw fit. Green captained the *Empress of China*, the first trading ship to make the journey to China (and back) setting sail from New York Harbor on February 22, 1784, only five months after the Treaty of Paris ended the Revolutionary War. The ship, largely funded by Philadelphians, carried ginseng roots and Spanish silver dollars. In addition to this sea letter, Green brought with him a copy of the Declaration of Independence as well as copies of the several treaties made with the different European powers. He was instructed by Daniel Parker, the ship's owner, to present the documents as necessary to prove that he was representing a legitimate, if newly formed, independent nation. Captain Green's Sea Letter illustrates that early Americans saw the *Empress'* voyage as not only a private effort by merchants to make money, but also a quasi-diplomatic mission to introduce the new United States as a nation worthy of conducting trade on a global scale.

While there are many stories to be celebrated as America honors its 250th anniversary in 2026, the role Philadelphia played in shaping the new nation's trade ambitions with China is less known. *Seeking Profit and Power: Philadelphia, China Trade, and the Making of America* will shine a light on this important and unique aspect to the semiquincentennial's narratives. Visitors will be sure to find engaging material that will transport them to a foreign and dangerous place and time; this will be an exhibition not to be missed.



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# The Port of Philadelphia welcomes Norwegian Cruise Line with inaugural call of the “Norwegian Jewel”

*New Cruise Service marks a historic return to Philadelphia and launch of a new era at the PhilaPort Cruise Terminal*

PhilaPort marked a major milestone on April 16, 2026 with the inaugural call of Norwegian Cruise Line® to Philadelphia, as Norwegian Jewel® arrived at the PhilaPort Cruise Terminal, launching a new era of cruising along the Delaware River. The arrival represents the return of cruise service to Philadelphia for the first time in more than 15 years and reinforces the Port’s commitment to expanding its role as a multi-faceted economic engine for the region.

To commemorate the occasion, PhilaPort and Norwegian Cruise Line hosted a special onboard ceremony and presentation aboard Norwegian Jewel, attended by regional and state leaders, including Governor Josh Shapiro and Philadelphia Mayor Chelle Parker, along with industry partners and stakeholders.

“This is a defining moment for The Port of Philadelphia,” said PhilaPort Executive Director & CEO Jeff Theobald. “The arrival of Norwegian Cruise Line and Norwegian Jewel signals the beginning of a new chapter for our port, our city, and the entire region. As we continue to grow beyond cargo operations, this new cruise service strengthens our position as a gateway to global travel and commerce while delivering meaningful economic impact for Pennsylvania.”

In collaboration with PhilaPort and Tincum Township, Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings Ltd, the parent company of Norwegian Cruise Line, is currently building a brand-new terminal due to open this cruise season designed to welcome guests and facilitate an easy embarkation and disembarkation process. The PhilaPort Cruise Terminal

will be located adjacent to Philadelphia International Airport.

“Today’s inaugural call reflects years of collaboration and shared vision,” said PhilaPort Board Chairman Michael Pearson. “We are proud to welcome Norwegian Cruise Line as an exclusive partner at the PhilaPort Cruise Terminal and to bring cruising back to Philadelphia in a way that benefits our workforce, our tourism industry, and our local economy.”



“Today marks an important and exciting milestone for our city: after years of hard work, collaboration, and advocacy, the cruise industry has officially returned to Philadelphia!” said Philadelphia City Council Majority Leader, Katherine Gilmore Richardson. “As an avid cruiser, I know and have seen firsthand how this industry brings energy, visitors, and economic opportunity to cruise embarkation cities across the country. Now, Philadelphia is ready to benefit from that same momentum, and I look forward to continuing to grow and support the cruising industry right here at home. Thank you to all the partners who helped make this possible, especially the PhilaPort board and

staff, Norwegian Cruise Line, and International Longshoremen’s Association Local 1291, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the City of Philadelphia.”

Beginning this spring, Norwegian Jewel will sail a series of itineraries from Philadelphia to Bermuda as well as voyages to Canada and New England this fall, offering travelers throughout the Mid-Atlantic the opportunity to depart from their own back-

first time in over 15 years, travelers in the Mid-Atlantic area will once again be able to sail from their own backyard with us to experience everything NCL is known for. With Norwegian Jewel leading our reintroduction and Norwegian Pearl following her later this year, we’re proud to bring our signature freedom and flexibility back to this incredible city and deliver the exceptional experiences our guests know and love.”

The introduction of homeport cruising is projected to generate 2,185 direct and indirect jobs and approximately \$300 million in annual economic output throughout the Commonwealth, supporting labor-intensive services that contribute to regional economic well-being.

The arrival of Norwegian Jewel also aligns with broader milestones for Philadelphia, including preparations for the nation’s 250th anniversary, further positioning the city as a premier destination for both domestic and international visitors.

As part of its long-term commitment to the region NCLH is expected to expand service in Philadelphia with additional sailings and future deployments.

yard. These voyages include overnight stays in Bermuda and visits to historic and scenic destinations along the East Coast and Eastern Canada.

“Norwegian Cruise Line’s return to Philadelphia marks an exciting and meaningful milestone for us and the region,” said Marc Kazlauskas, President of Norwegian Cruise Line. “For the

## MITAGS Hosts Mariners for America Conference



Exchange member Dr. Arthur Sulzer (right) moderated a panel on maritime-focused high schools and early outreach at the recent Mariners for America Conference hosted by the Maritime Institute of Technology and Graduate Studies. Other panelists included (l-r), Kristie Wolford, Founding Director of Maritime253, Molly Dushay, Executive Director of the North American Marine Environment Protections Association, Jimmy Zatwarnicki, President of the Liberty Nautical Education Center, and Matt Wilson, CEO of the Maritime Academy Charter School. The panel discussed topics including community programs, collaborative training, early engagement, and educational support.

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# Building futures, honoring legacy: a new chapter for the Henson Heritage & Training Center

A new name often signals more than a rebrand—it marks a renewed sense of purpose. That is certainly the case for the organization formerly known as the Camden Shipyard & Maritime Museum, now proudly operating as the Henson Heritage & Training Center. This change reflects both a deep respect for the region’s maritime roots and a forward-looking commitment to workforce development, particularly through its growing Pre-Apprentice Carpentry Program.

The new name honors Matthew Henson, the African-American explorer and skilled carpenter who played a pivotal role in one of history’s most daring expeditions. In 1909, after years of Arctic exploration, Henson reached the North Pole—arriving ahead of the rest of the expedition team and becoming the first to plant the American flag. His perseverance, craftsmanship, and quiet leadership now serve as a powerful symbol for students learning to build not only structures, but futures.

At the heart of the Henson Heritage & Training Center is its Pre-Apprentice Carpentry Program, an intensive training initiative that has quickly become a cornerstone of workforce development in Camden. Since launching in 2023, the program has graduated 100 students, with continued growth each year

and expanded programming planned for the future.

The program combines hands-on carpentry training with essential life and career skills. Students—many of whom have little to no prior experi-



*A group of graduates proudly hold their certificates, marking not just the end of a program, but the beginning of new opportunities. Their expressions reflect confidence, achievement, and a shared journey that mirrors the perseverance of Matthew Henson himself.*

ence with tools—learn everything from measuring and cutting wood to constructing full-scale shed structures that mirror the components of a house. These projects include framing, roofing, siding, and finishing work, giving participants a comprehensive introduction to the trade.

Led by veteran union carpenter

Cornelius “Con” Duffy, the program emphasizes discipline and reliability as much as technical skill. “Be on time,” Duffy tells students—because success in the trades, and in life, begins with showing up ready to work.

demonstrating how the program directly contributes to neighborhood improvement.

The impact of the program extends well beyond the ten-week training period. Graduates move on to union apprenticeships, trade jobs, and other career pathways, often supported by resume preparation, mock interviews, and financial literacy training provided during the course.

Equally important is the sense of accomplishment students carry with them.

This connection between past and present is at the core of the center’s mission. Just as Henson relied on skill, resilience, and determination to navigate uncharted territory, today’s students are learning to navigate their own paths—equipped with tools, training, and belief in their potential.

The Henson Heritage & Training Center stands as a powerful example of what happens when history, education, and community investment intersect. By honoring a pioneering figure like Matthew Henson, while providing practical, hands-on training, the organization is doing more than changing its name—it is redefining opportunity.

In Camden, a new generation is building—structures, careers, and confidence—one project at a time.

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## Exchange report of the board

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### Renewable Energy Faced Many Hurdles

**Administration Halts Offshore Wind Energy Development** – Throughout 2025, the Trump Administration set several roadblocks, first to new offshore wind energy projects, then subsequently to projects already underway. The President first signed an executive order that temporarily prohibited any federal waters from being eligible for future offshore wind leasing.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency then withdrew a permit it had previously granted for the construction of the Atlantic Shores offshore wind project, and the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management took several measures to block future plans and rescinded previous approvals for projects already underway, one as high as 80% completed.

**Trump Eliminates Subsidies for Wind and Solar Power** – In further efforts to curtail wind energy development, President Trump signed an Executive Order terminating tax credits and other subsidies for renewable energy facilities. The order also directed the Secretary of the Interior to reorient regulations and policies such that they deprioritize preference toward wind and solar energy in favor of nuclear energy and fossil fuels.

**Wind Energy Battle Goes to Court** – A coalition of 18 states filed suit in a federal district court to challenge the President's efforts to stop wind energy project development. The states argued that the president was acting outside of his legal authority in pausing permits and that the move would stunt U.S. energy production in contradiction with another presidential executive order declaring a "national energy emergency."

In December, a federal judge overturned President Trump's indefinite moratorium on offshore wind development yet provided the administration time to supply the classified information on which the stop-work orders rely. The Administration had revoked the authority of project developers to build in federal waters, citing "national security concerns."

**DOT Redirects \$679 Million to Maritime Infrastructure** – The U.S. Department of Transportation reallocated funding earmarked by the previous administration for offshore wind development to reinforce the maritime sector and reassert U.S. maritime dominance. Among the redirected funds, MARAD withdrew six projects and terminated five Port Infrastructure Development Program-funded projects, including the Wind Port at Paulsboro.

### AGENCY OPERATIONAL UPDATES

**Advisory Groups Suspended** – In January 2025, the Acting Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security terminated membership in all advisory committees in alignment with the department's commitment to eliminate misuse of resources and to

focus on priorities. While some groups have been reinstated, three committees in which the Exchange had actively participated are still in limbo: The National Maritime Security Advisory Committee, the Trade Support Network, and the Customs Electronic Systems Action Committee.

The Exchange advocated for the reinstatement of these and other important committees that provide critical guidance to the port's federal partners.

**CBP Ended DIS for Export Manifest** – After several extensions, Customs and Border Protection discontinued the use of the Document Imaging System to file export manifests effective December 1, 2025. CBP made the announcement with the goal of transitioning filers to the Electronic Export Manifest pilot program. Filers either transitioned or reverted to submitting hard-copy manifests.

**Coast Guard Considers Navigation Buoy Removals** – The Coast Guard First District proposed removing approximately 350 physical aids to navigation, citing that the devices predate global navigation satellite systems, electronic navigation charts, and electronic charting systems. While the proposed reduction was outside of the Delaware River region, mariners were concerned that changes made in the First District could be promulgated to other districts in short order.

**PSGP Grant Applicants Faced Short Window** – After a significant delay in announcing the Port Security Grant Program, FEMA provided only a two-week application window in August to apply for the grant opportunity. A total of \$90 million was available to applicants. Exchange members and stakeholders nationally are concerned that the PSGP program may be in jeopardy due to the Administration's shifting priorities.

**Coast Guard Mandates Cyber Requirements** – Effective July 16, 2025, the Coast Guard implemented minimum cybersecurity requirements for U.S.-flagged vessels, Outer Continental Shelf installations, and regulated maritime facilities. These include requirements to develop and maintain a Cybersecurity Plan and a Cyber Incident Response Plan, designate a Cybersecurity Officer, and take various other measures. Affected entities must submit their cybersecurity plans to the Coast Guard for review and approval within 24 months of the final rule's effective date.

### GOOD NEWS FOR THE PORT

**Right Whale Strike Reduction Rule Withdrawn** – In a significant win for the port community, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration withdrew the proposed changes to the North Atlantic Right Whale Vessel Strike Reduction Speed Restriction rule proposed in 2022. The Exchange opposed NOAA's changes that would have expanded the existing speed restriction to smaller vessels between 35 and 65 feet, increased the length of the restrictions seasonally, and established a larger area where the limits would apply. The measures would have posed serious safety and navigation concerns for pilot launches and other smaller craft.

**Labor Agreement Reached** – The International Longshoremen's Association and United States Maritime Alliance reached a six-year agreement avoiding an East and Gulf Coast strike in January 2025. The agreement includes restrictions on automation, a significant win for the ILA, includes a 62% pay hike, and guarantees labor through 2030.

**Exchange and Others Reduce Phila. Security Guard Training Requirements** – In December, the Philadelphia City Council passed a bill that dictates the terms and methods of security officer training within Philadelphia city limits. The Exchange contacted several members of the Council to oppose the passage of the original draft, expressing concerns that the language would be too burdensome to be practicable for the maritime industry and its members. Stakeholders were successful in getting the bill amended to significantly lessen the burden and narrow the scope of requirements.

### AROUND THE PORT

**"SS United States" Makes its Final Voyage** – The historic "SS United States" finally departed from its home of nearly 30 years on the Delaware River on February 19, 2025. The ship was towed to Mobile, Alabama, where it is being prepared for its ultimate destination and final resting place as the world's largest artificial reef off the coast of Okaloosa County, Florida.

**Port of Philadelphia Ranked Most Productive in North America** – According to the 2024 Container Port Performance Index released by the World Bank Group and S&P Global Market Intelligence, the Port of Philadelphia is the most productive port in North America for the second year in a row. The measurements are based on overall vessel turnaround efficiency, measured by metrics like docking times, crane operations, and department schedules.

**Port Wilmington Signs a Deal with Chiquita to Extend Services** – Enstructure, the operator of Port Wilmington, signed a long-term agreement with Chiquita to expand its partnership as the brand's mid-Atlantic distribution hub. The partnership between the companies began in 1988 and has since established Port Wilmington as Chiquita's largest port operation in North America.

**PhilaPort Breaks Ground on New Cruise Terminal** – The Port of Philadelphia began construction on the future PhilaPort Cruise Terminal, a 16-acre site adjacent to Philadelphia International Airport that will serve as the region's newest gateway for Norwegian Cruise Lines' cruise travel beginning in April 2026.

**PhilaPort Acquires 152-Acre Mustin Yard** – PhilaPort acquired the SouthPort Marine Terminal-adjacent Mustin Yard Property from Norfolk Southern Corporation. Originally part of the former Philadelphia Navy Yard, the site has long been viewed as a critical asset for the Port's future growth.

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## MARITIME EXCHANGE MEMBERSHIP

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## The Maritime Society honors A. Robert Degen, Esq.



Exchange Chair John Reynolds, President George McCarthy, and Director Barbara Hunter joined Bob Degen at the Maritime Society's Award dinner to celebrate his achievement. Maritime Society President Lynn Cointot presided over the ceremonies and presented the Stephen Girard Award to Bob.

The Ports of Philadelphia Maritime Society presented the "Person of the Year" Stephen Girard Award to A. Robert Degen, Esq., on April 22, 2025. The award recognizes outstanding achievement and commitment to fostering growth at ports in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. His leadership, commitment, and untiring dedication to the port embodies the spirit of the award.

Bob serves as Secretary/Solicitor on the Maritime Exchange Board of Directors and is a merchant marine academy graduate, obtaining his B.S. in Marine Transportation from

SUNY Maritime College. Bob earned his J.D. from American University, Washington College of Law in 1974. His first job as an attorney was at the venerable Krusen Evans & Byrne law firm, where he was a partner and spent 20 years before Krusen disbanded and Fox Rothschild assumed its admiralty practice.

Bob went with the practice to Fox in 1995, as a partner and member of its Immigration Law Group. He stayed there until establishing his own law firm in May 2011.

Congratulations, Bob!

## The value of shore leave: a lifeline for seafarer wellbeing

By: Kathryn Bradley, Executive Director  
Seamen's Center of Wilmington

For seafarers who spend weeks and often months at sea, shore leave is far more than a break from routine—it is a vital lifeline for mental health and overall wellbeing. Life on board a vessel is demanding. Long hours, physical fatigue, isolation from family, and the constant motion of the sea can take a cumulative toll. While ships keep global trade moving, the people who operate them often do so at a personal cost that is largely unseen.

Time ashore offers something that cannot be replicated onboard: a sense of normalcy. The simple ability to step off a vessel, feel solid ground, and engage in everyday activities—shopping, sharing a conversation, or simply sitting

ous donation to support the Center.

It is a simple story, but it speaks volumes. Shore leave is not just about stepping off a ship—it is about restoring a sense of self. It is about dignity, connection, and the opportunity to pause, even briefly, from the relentless pace of life at sea.

However, moments like these do not happen on their own. They are made possible by a dedicated group of volunteers who give their time to drive vans, welcome visitors, listen, and create an environment where seafarers feel valued and cared for.

Today, that volunteer community is facing a challenge. Many of our long-serving volunteers—in-



in a comfortable, quiet space—can have a profound impact. These moments provide a mental reset, reduce stress, and help seafarers reconnect with the world beyond their ship.

Recently, we had the pleasure of welcoming several crew members from the "Ouro do Brasil" to the Seamen's Center of Wilmington. Some chose to take a trip to the local stores in the Center's van to pick up essentials and small comforts to take back on board. Others simply wanted a quiet afternoon. Two crew members who had previously visited decided to remain at the Center—watching NBA basketball on TV, relaxing, and enjoying a few hours of peace.

One gentleman, a member of the engine team, shared that he had been working at sea since 2011. He spoke warmly about the Center, saying he appreciated that it felt "homey"—a place where he could simply be. There was no pressure, no demands—just a welcoming environment where he and his colleagues could unwind. They browsed donated clothing, picked out items they needed, purchased some mementoes, and before returning to their ship, made a gener-

dividuals who have given years of compassion and commitment—are stepping back due to age or health, and we have sadly lost several dear members of our community in recent years. Their absence is deeply felt, not only by us, but by the countless seafarers whose lives they touched.

As the demand for our services continues to grow, so too does our need for new volunteers.

We are looking for individuals who can offer a few hours of their time—whether regularly or occasionally—to help us continue this vital work. No special experience is required, only a willingness to offer a warm welcome, a listening ear, and a helping hand. In return, volunteers gain something truly unique: the opportunity to meet people from all over the world and to make a meaningful difference in their lives during a time when it matters most.

For seafarers, a few hours ashore can make all the difference. With your help, we can ensure that every visit to Delaware is not just another port call, but a moment of care, connection, and humanity.

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## Capt. George McCarthy joins the board of World Trade Center Delaware

Although it was founded as the “Philadelphia Maritime Exchange,” the Exchange became known as the “Maritime Exchange for the Delaware River and Bay” in 1994. The change was made to acknowledge the role of the Exchange not just in Philadelphia, but in the economic ecosystem of the greater region. This unifying ethos is reflected in the diverse membership of the Exchange itself, and by the very companies and organizations that comprise that membership. One such organization with a mission to similarly bolster economic prosperity in our region and beyond is the World Trade Center Delaware; Maritime Exchange President George McCarthy was recently appointed to their Board of Directors.

“The World Trade Center Delaware exists to help Delaware businesses connect more effectively to global markets by advancing trade, investment, strategic partnerships, and international opportunities that strengthen our state’s economic competitiveness,” explained WTC Delaware President Dr. Mary Swenson. “Our mission is to serve as a catalyst for global growth by connecting business, government, and institu-

tional partners to the people, resources, and relationships that drive two-way trade and investment.”

Dr. Swenson added that “Bringing Captain George McCarthy onto our board is a meaningful step in advancing that mission. His leadership, maritime expertise, and deep understanding of the Delaware River and Bay’s critical role in regional and international commerce bring tremendous value to our organization. Captain McCarthy strengthens our ability to connect trade strategy with real-world logistics, port infrastructure, and supply chain insight, all of which are essential to supporting Delaware’s business community and expanding our global impact.”

Captain McCarthy described the opportunity to serve on the board of directors as “...an honor and a privilege. Maritime trade really is world trade and vice versa; if you talk about one, you’re talking about both. Dr. Swenson and the rest of the board are all experts and consummate professionals, I look forward to working with all of them to build toward the mission of the World Trade Center and to serve our region.”

## Port Leaders Congratulate Pa. Sen. Tartaglione



Former Pennsylvania State Representative William Keller, Pilots’ Association for the Bay & River Delaware President Capt. David Cuff, and Exchange President Capt. George E. McCarthy were on hand to wish Pennsylvania State Senator Christine “Tina” Tartaglione congratulations as the recipient of the Seamen’s Church Institute Spirit of the Port Award in early March. Well deserved, Senator.



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## PhilaPort board selects Rich Lazer as next Executive Director and CEO

serving as Philadelphia's Deputy Mayor for Labor under former Mayor Jim Kenney. Lazer has also served as a member of the PhilaPort Board of Directors since 2019, giving him direct knowledge of the port's operations, strategic priorities, and long-term growth initiatives.

"Rich is a proven leader with deep roots in Philadelphia and a strong record of delivering results," said PhilaPort Board Chairman Michael Pearson. "His leadership experience, strategic mindset, and commitment to public service make him exceptionally well-positioned to guide PhilaPort into its next era of growth and opportunity."

"The Board's selection committee conducted a thorough and highly competitive search process in partnership with Korn Ferry that drew more than 100 applicants from across the globe," said David Maser, PhilaPort Board Member and Selection Committee Chair. "Rich distinguished himself through every stage of the process with his leadership credentials, strategic vision, and clear understanding of what it takes to build on PhilaPort's momentum. We are confident he is the right

person to lead the organization forward."

He will take the helm of an organization that has seen historic progress under Theobald's leadership. Since 2016, PhilaPort more than doubled cargo volumes, secured over 180 acres for expansion, completed the Delaware River Main Channel Deepening Project, advanced nearly \$1 billion in capital improvements, became financially self-sustaining for the first time in its history, and reintroduced cruise operations to Philadelphia through the launch of the new PhilaPort Cruise Terminal.

"PhilaPort has tremendous momentum and even greater potential ahead," said Rich Lazer. "I am honored by the Board's confidence and excited for the opportunity to work alongside our employees, maritime partners, labor workforce, and stakeholders to continue growing jobs, investment, and opportunity for Philadelphia and the Commonwealth."

"Jeff Theobald has been one of the most consequential leaders in PhilaPort's modern history, transforming the organization through vision, determina-

tion, and results," Pearson added. "Under his leadership, PhilaPort achieved historic growth, delivered generational infrastructure investments, strengthened its competitive position on the East Coast, and charted a bold course for the future. We are deeply grateful for his decade of service and the lasting legacy he leaves for Philadelphia, the Commonwealth, and our maritime industry."

"It has been the honor of a lifetime to serve PhilaPort during such an exciting period of growth and transformation, and to work alongside an extraordinary team, our Board, maritime partners, labor workforce, and stakeholders across the region," said Jeff Theobald. "When I arrived in 2016, we set ambitious goals to modernize our facilities, deepen the channel, attract new global partners, and build a strong foundation for the future, and together, we achieved them. I am proud of all we accomplished, and I am confident PhilaPort is well-positioned for continued success in the years ahead. I congratulate Rich and look forward to supporting a smooth transition."

The Board of Directors of PhilaPort has selected Rich Lazer as the next Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer of PhilaPort, ushering in a new chapter for one of America's fastest-growing ports. Lazer will succeed Jeff Theobald, who announced his retirement in December after a decade of transformative leadership. Lazer is expected to assume the role on June 1, 2026.

Lazer, who currently serves as Executive Director of the Philadelphia Parking Authority has earned a reputation as a respected public-sector leader with vast experience in labor relations, operations management, stakeholder engagement, and complex negotiations. Prior to leading the PPA, he held senior leadership positions in Philadelphia city government, most recently

## Exchange report of the board

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### OPERATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

**2025, the Year of Migrations** – The Exchange's IT department had its work cut out for it in 2025 with multiple migrations occurring throughout the year. The most significant involved moving all networking equipment from its Port of Wilmington disaster recovery office to an off-site data center in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. We also took a hard look at backup capabilities and migrated from a traditional tape backup system to the cloud.

On the software side, we migrated the staff's suite of office software and email to Microsoft 365, which provides more flexibility in accessing applications from multiple locations

and includes additional redundancies. Finally, the Exchange finished out the year by upgrading all PCs to Windows 11 as Microsoft stopped supporting Windows 10 in October.

**Enhancements Continue to Maritime On-Line** – As in previous years, the Exchange dedicated efforts to improving Maritime On-Line, its suite of maritime-focused applications, concentrating on actively enhancing system functionalities for Ship Reporting and TRACS. Key improvements included better cargo identification, an optimized bill of lading status screen, and refined features for EDA submissions to CBP, as well as enhancements to in-bond processes and user interface distinctions for import/export manifests.

We made notable progress to enhance the manifest upload functionality aimed at preserving historical records, as well as functionality to prevent multiple transmissions to CBP and improve data entry and vessel lookups.

At year-end, we initiated discussions with our developers on a Maritime On-Line rewrite project focused on modernizing the system's backend and adding user features. The Exchange expects this to be a multi-year endeavor.

### MEMBER PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

**Maritime Exchange 150th Anniversary** – The Exchange held its 150th-anniversary gala dinner at the Switch House by Cescaphe in Philadelphia on May 21, 2025. The highly successful event was months in the planning by the entire Exchange staff, and over 230 people attended. U.S. Coast Guard CAPT Kate Higgins-Bloom provided the keynote address, and attendees had the chance to enjoy an extensive historical maritime exhibit and live music.

**Data Gathering Initiative Goes Live** – On July 29, 2025, the Exchange formally announced that the Data Gathering Initiative system went live. Conceived by the Private Berth Dredge Committee in 2018, the Exchange designed DGI as a centralized repository containing vetted scientific, environmental, and industry data meant to streamline the process of obtaining permit approvals for waterfront construction projects on the river. We received grant funding from NOAA in 2023 to complete the project with the support of Delaware Senators Tom Carper and Chris Coons.

**Committees and Programs Keep Members Engaged** – The Exchange continued to keep members informed and engaged through its various committees, including the Maritime Operations Committee, the Chilean Fruit Working Group, and

the Government Affairs Committee. These work groups provided a forum for stakeholders to discuss and address challenges of mutual concern. In December, the organization held its highly popular general port awareness training program, Delaware River 101, to provide a broad port overview for newcomers to the industry.

### IN CLOSING

Despite major shifts in federal policies that had deep impacts on the maritime industry, the port remained strong, and the Exchange continued to provide the same high level of service to the membership as it has for 150 years. Delaware River stakeholders should be commended for their perseverance and commitment to success.

But the work is not done.

The breadth and scope of the threatened, deferred, or imposed tariffs and fees imposed in 2025 go well beyond the scope of this report. Needless to say, the Administration's actions had a profound effect on the world economy and global trading partnerships, but the recent Supreme Court decision striking down the tariffs will undoubtedly have ripple effects throughout 2026.

The Exchange will closely monitor any new developments and continue to advocate for the reduction or elimination of other tariffs not included in the Supreme Court decision. We will also oppose the postponed USTR vessel fees and support changes to national policy that will enhance the competitiveness of the Delaware River. As always, the Exchange will continue to provide operational support to help facilitate commerce.

The Exchange board and staff look forward to another successful year in 2026.

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## In Memoriam



### Vincent James Signorello

The Exchange regrets to inform our readers of the passing of Vincent James Signorello of Punta Gorda who passed away peacefully February 16, 2026 surrounded by his wife and children. Vincent was an astute, well-respected business professional with an entrepreneurial spirit. He owned several companies including Stockard Shipping with offices in Philadelphia, Baltimore, Savannah, Wilmington, Charleston, & Miami.

Vincent served our country in the U.S. Army during the Korean War, a service of which he was very proud, was an avid golfer, and enjoyed going on cruises many times a year. He had a wide variety of interests including art and history and was admired by his peers for his clear memory of historical events.

Vincent & his wife Jutta lived in the Philadelphia area for many years before retiring to Florida.

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## In Memoriam



### Henry C. Lucas, III

The Exchange is saddened to report the passing of Henry C. Lucas, III, who died on March 19, 2026. A distinguished attorney with over forty years of experience in all aspects of shipping maritime/admiralty law, Henry was a partner and co-founding member of Lucas and Cavalier, LLC.

Mr. Lucas was an associate editor of American Maritime Cases since 1994 and has been included in the Best Lawyers in America since 1989. He wrote extensively on maritime and admiralty issues, and in 2004 was elected to membership in the National Advisory Board of The Admiralty Law Institute - Tulane University School of Law.

Mr. Lucas also served as President of the Board of School Directors for the Lower Merion School District from 1978 to 1979, demonstrating his dedication to education and his local community.

Over the course of his accomplished legal career, he was admitted to practice in state and federal courts throughout Pennsylvania, including the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit. Prior to founding his firm, he served as a partner at Rawle & Henderson and as special counsel to Duane Morris and Heckscher.

## CBP changing of the guard

After 32 years of government service, 10 duty stations, and several temporary duty assignments, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Area Port Director of Philadelphia, Cleatus P. Hunt Jr. retired on February 21, 2026. Before coming to the Delaware River, he served as U.S. Customs and Border Protection regional attaché in Japan, where he had responsibility for Japan, Australia, and New Zealand. Cleatus previously served as the Acting Port Director for the port of Newark/New York area and the Area Port Director in Dallas, Texas.

Elliot Ortiz is now serving as acting Area Port Director, Philadelphia. He started his CBP career in the Port of New York/Newark as a CBP Agriculture Specialist and worked his way through the ranks as a Supervisory Agriculture Specialist in the Port of Las Vegas, Chief CBP Agriculture Specialist in the Port of Boston, and Agricul-



ture Branch Chief for the Area Port of Philadelphia. Mr. Ortiz also served abroad for CBP in Toronto Preclearance from 2007 – 2012.

Please join the Exchange in extending well wishes to Cleatus on his retirement and Elliot on his assignment.

## New export manifest rule questions

*continued from page 1*

Short-sea shippers face similar challenges. In many cases, orders for close-range territories such as Bermuda are often placed within hours or only a few days of expected sailings, and the proposed 24-hour rule would severely impact operations, especially for smaller carriers serving these trusted territories.

“Bermudian importers, including retailers, restaurants, construction suppliers, and medical distributors, rely on just-in-time delivery models due to the island’s limited warehousing capacity and high storage costs,” said Voigt Maritime Inc. President Gregory Henry. “U.S. exporters routinely receive orders less than 48 hours prior to loading, and the result is that cargo is often received, manifested, and loaded within a compressed window, often on the same day as vessel departure.”

“Monday voyages are particularly affected,” Henry continued. “Freight arrives at the terminal on Monday morning, and the vessel departs that same day, providing no realistic opportunity to satisfy a 24-hour pre-loading or even a two-hour pre-departure electronic filing window for all cargo.”

Empty containers are similarly affected by pre-departure filing requirements.

Exchange members report that some terminals may load empties last minute on outbound vessels, since containers may arrive at the gate as the vessel is being loaded. Not allowing empties to be manifested post departure, for a final check and balance of load list with terminal, creates the possibility of data inaccuracy filed with CBP.

The initial filing option may also pose some technical challenges for cur-

rent export manifest submitters. The traditional export manifest is based on a vessel, carrier SCAC, and voyage number model under which port, bill, container, and cargo information is structured. The initial filing data set excludes the vessel, voyage number, carrier, and container number information.

“While the industry and the Exchange can certainly program to meet this new filing model, it will require more resources and time to comply,” said Exchange Operations Manager Laura Miller. “The pilot program, for which we programmed and have been filing since 2021, operates under the full manifest model. Accommodating a limited initial data set will take additional programming and should be tested in the CBP export pilot program to help ensure a seamless deployment in a production environment, both for industry and CBP.”

The Exchange submitted comments to the Federal Register notice based on feedback from its members and its own internal discussions. CBP is expected to review industry comments and issue either a revised proposed rule or its final rule at some point in the future. The Exchange recommended the agency include another comment period based on any CBP modifications to the initial proposed rule.

The Exchange strongly supports the Electronic Export Manifest initiative and has been a proponent of automation since the inception of the Automated Commercial System in the 1980s. The challenges of meeting the security demands of CBP and the operational needs of industry are not insurmountable, and the Exchange looks forward to continued dialogue with its members and federal partners and is cautiously optimistic that reasonable compromises can be made.



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## Q&A with LTC Baum

continued from page 1

**Q: Dredge disposal can be a big challenge for any port. How is dredge disposal capacity looking for the region and what beneficial reuse plans may be in place?**

A: In this region, we are fortunate that our predecessors had the vision and foresight to acquire and maintain Dredged Material Disposal Facilities along the Delaware River & Bay and the Chesapeake & Delaware Canal. This arrangement is somewhat unique if you compare the Delaware Valley to other regions or USACE Districts. We own and operate 13 Dredged Material Placement Facilities along the River. In recent years, we've carefully assessed future capacity and worked to raise and widen dikes to increase capacity. Owning these sites and carefully managing them enables us to maintain the 45-foot channel.

In parallel, we remain focused on advancing the beneficial use of dredged material. Lieutenant General William Graham, our Chief of Engineers and Commanding General, continues to champion the "70-30 goal" established by his predecessor Lieutenant General Scott Spellmon. With this goal, we are seeking to use 70 percent of the sediment that is dredged for beneficial purposes. We still have a long way to go to achieve this, but our District has made significant progress locally.

**Q: Beyond channel maintenance, what do you see as your greatest challenges and opportunities during your tour in Philadelphia?**

A: In general, we have numerous opportunities across the Delaware Valley and our five-state area of responsibility, but I'd highlight three things...two being especially pertinent to the Delaware River and Bay and the Port community.

First, we are hyper focused on the ongoing construction of the Dredge DONNELLY, a 320-foot, medium-class hopper dredge that will replace the Dredge McFARLAND. The DONNELLY is currently under construction in Panama City, FL and is estimated to be ready for service in early 2028. As many Beacon readers probably know, the Dredge McFARLAND has long played a critical role in maintaining navigation on the Delaware River & Bay. Simply put, the Dredge DONNELLY is going to continue this legacy and enable us to continue to deliver our navigation mission.

Second, I'd point out that this winter Mr. Adam Telle, the Assistant Secretary of Army for Civil Works, rolled out his 'Building Infrastructure, Not Paperwork' initiative. This effort transforms many different aspects of USACE activities and has many opportunities for us in this region. The initiative is designed to rebuild our ability to deliver major projects by overhauling the entire delivery pipeline, from initial design and contracting, through final execution. The initiative has elements about increasing dredging efficiency, streamlining permitting, speeding up feasibility studies, and enabling Commanders to better prioritize resources. At the District level, we're exploring the opportunities under this new initiative that will help us execute our mission faster.

Third – like many organizations, we are wrestling with the best ways to leverage new technology, particularly AI. This is certainly an ongoing effort across the organization, along different disciplines, and will continue for the rest of my tenure and well into the future. And it aligns with Mr. Telle's vision for us to get faster and more efficient. AI tools and technology will certainly help us achieve that vision.

## McAllister Towing unloads Avenger class minesweepers



On March 13, 2026, McAllister was given the responsibility of unloading and towing four decommissioned Avenger class minesweepers ("USS Devastator," "Sentry," "Gladiator," and "Dextrous") off the semi-submersible heavy lift vessel "M/V Seaway Hawk." The operation was executed by an outstanding team of McAllister crews and vessels from multiple ports. Led by Captain Joseph Benton II, the tugs "Justine McAllister" (New York), "Beverly R. McAllister," "Reid McAllister," "Suzanne McAllister," (all three based in Philadelphia) and "Jackie F. McAllister" (based in Portland) safely moved the four minesweepers from the entrance of the Delaware River to the Philadelphia Navy Yard.



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# Editorial

## Cabotage Anyone?

This editorial is neither for nor against the Jones Act or its recent second waiver by the current Administration. This author's intent is solely to recommend that the time has come for all interests to take a significant step back from forever arguing solely for their individual trees at the expense of the need and value of our collective forest.

One such tree, cabotage, is defined as the transport of goods or passengers between two points within the same country, by a vessel, aircraft, train, or vehicle registered in another country. In short, domestic freight and passengers being handled by foreign interests.

In the U.S., each form of industrial transport listed above has some form of domestic regulation against foreign involvement to protect from cabotage. Specific to our domestic maritime capabilities is Section 27 of the Merchant Marine Act of 1920, known as the Jones Act, requiring all goods transported by water between U.S. ports be carried on ships constructed, flagged, crewed, owned, and operated by U.S. citizens. The act was introduced in 1920 by Senator Wesley Jones, then chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee, who stated that the act was "...an earnest effort to lay the foundation of a policy that will build up and maintain an adequate American merchant marine in competition with the shipping of the world." It is worth noting that 90 other countries, representing roughly 80% of the world's coastline, have similar laws restricting foreign activity in their domestic maritime trades.

Setting aside the current back and forth concerning the value (or not) of the Jones Act and/or the recent Administration waivers, at the very core of any maritime Jones Act argument is simply one of local cost versus national benefit. Why should a domestic producer pay more to deliver their goods (i.e. at the expense of their tree) than a foreign manufacturer does, only to ensure a globally competitive U.S. fleet (the forest) that has yet to materialize as a result?

More to the point of this editorial, continuing to rest solely on the original dual intent of the Jones Act (an act to protect domestic trade and thereby build a globally competitive fleet) has long passed its second value proposition. Further, the Jones Act was to be the foundation of a policy, not the final answer. While it does continue and, as such, remains very relevant to the protection of our domestic maritime capabilities, extensive inland fleets, offshore trades, and coast-wise capabilities, it needs updating. It has not resulted, nor will it result in a globally competitive U.S. merchant fleet. That patch of forest has proven bare.

The above is just one example as there are many other such trees of narrow interest in the arguments for, against and/or within the circle of opinions as to the solution to our complete loss of U.S. global commercial ocean presence. Bottom line, the return of a U.S. global fleet will, in the long term, provide benefits untold across all interests albeit perhaps not to anyone's immediate quarterly earnings. Perhaps our existing narrow individual concerns can best come together under the undeniable fact that the creation of a global U.S. fleet will be a long term project and as such, will be this generation's legacy to the next generation of maritime workers.

## Keep the Stranded Seafarers in Your Thoughts



The Exchange directors and staff are keeping the thousands of seafarers stranded in the Persian Gulf close to their hearts. Nearly 20,000 mariners are captive because of the Iran War, surrounded by drones, warships, and mines. Please keep these men and women in your thoughts and prayers.



### Photos Welcome

The Maritime Exchange encourages cub photographers in the port to send us their pictures. The Exchange maintains a large library of port photos and welcomes contributions from you, our readers, to expand our collection. Who knows, it might just make the next issue of *The Beacon*.

*The Beacon* is the official newsletter of the Maritime Exchange for the Delaware River and Bay. The Exchange encourages its readers to submit letters to the editor at any time in response to articles that appear in *The Beacon* or to address other topics of interest to the port community.

Please direct any correspondence, comments, or inquiries regarding

the contents of this newsletter to:

[exchange@maritimedelriv.com](mailto:exchange@maritimedelriv.com)

Maritime Exchange, Attn: Beacon Editor  
240 Cherry Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106



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# The Jones Act Waiver – fuel for further reform?



## Legal Ease

By: **Michael F. Merlie, Esq.**  
**Gordon Prince, Esq.**  
**Gawthrop Greenwood PC**

The ongoing Jones Act waiver issued this year has reopened familiar debates in U.S. maritime policy. The waiver, and its extension, appear to comply with the letter of current law. However, the purpose of the waiver stands in tension with reforms Congress enacted just five years ago to narrow waiver authority.

The Jones Act requires that merchandise transported between U.S. ports be carried on vessels that are U.S.-built, U.S.-owned, U.S.-flagged, and crewed primarily by U.S. mariners. These requirements can be suspended when a Jones Act waiver is granted.

Prior to amendments in 2021, both discretionary waivers and waivers requested by the Secretary of Defense were governed by the same broad “in the interest of national defense” standard, with neither subject to explicit duration limits, nor reporting requirements. The primary difference was who initiated the request rather than the scope of authority exercised.

Beginning in 2005, requests for discretionary waivers became much more common, usually in response to a natural disaster. The increased frequency of these requests raised concerns in Congress. Some felt that the broad banner of “in the interest of national defense” was used as catch-all justification rather than a narrow standard related to defense readiness.

In 2021, Congress amended the Jones Act waiver statute, sharply narrowing the discretionary waiver pathway. Congress capped the initial period of a discretionary waiver at ten (10) days, subject to an extension of up to a maximum of forty-five (45) days. A discretionary waiver also now required formal findings by the Maritime Administration that no qualified U.S.-flag vessels were available, and imposed reporting and publication obligations. The intent was to have discretionary waivers used in extraordinary circumstances for a limited period.

At the same time, Congress preserved a separate and broader mechanism for waivers requested by the Secretary of Defense but tightened the statute to require that such waivers be requested only when “necessary in the interest of national defense to address an immediate adverse effect on military operations.”

The initial sixty (60) day waiver issued in March 2026 followed severe global energy disruptions linked to the conflict with Iran. Critically, the waiver was structured as a defense-requested waiver, formally issued at the request of the Secretary of Defense. The administration justified the action on the grounds that constrained domestic fuel logistics posed risks to military readiness, defense-related transportation, and allied support operations.

Because the waiver was issued at the request of the Secretary of Defense, it was not subject to the duration limits applicable to discretionary waivers. The statute contains no explicit time cap for defense-requested waivers.

On April 24, 2026, the administration approved a request from the Secretary of Defense to extend the Jones Act waiver for an additional ninety (90) days, citing the persistence of defense related energy logistics concerns. Nothing prohibits renewing or continuing a defense-requested waiver so long as the requisite statutory findings are made.

From a legal standpoint, this approach is difficult to challenge. Courts historically afford substantial deference to executive determinations of military necessity, and Congress consciously left defense-requested waivers without a hard duration limit in 2021.

Yet the scale and duration of the 2026 waiver highlight a gap between technical legality and legislative intent. The waiver covers hundreds of product categories, applies nationwide, and will span one hundred fifty (150) days. Its primary operational effect has been to enable foreign-



*Gordon Prince, Esq.*



*Michael F. Merlie, Esq.*

flag tankers to move civilian fuel and commodities between U.S. ports.

The outcome has renewed bipartisan discussion of further reforms. Proposals under debate include imposing explicit duration limits on discretionary waivers, narrowing the definition of “immediate adverse effect on military operations,” creating energy-specific or regional carve-outs, and pairing any waiver flexibility with subsidies or long-term charters to rebuild Jones Act tanker capacity. Others advocate structural reforms, such as relaxing the U.S.-

build requirement while retaining U.S. flagging and crewing.

The 2026 Jones Act waiver and its extension appear technically legal under the framework Congress enacted in 2021. At the same time, they expose the limits of that framework and raise legitimate questions about whether the current waiver aligns with congressional intent. Whether Congress responds by tightening waiver authority further or by modernizing the Jones Act itself may define the next chapter of U.S. maritime policy.



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## Notes & News

The **Four Chaplains Memorial Foundation** was honored with a proclamation from the City of Philadelphia celebrating the **75th Anniversary** of the Chapel of Four Chaplains at its 58th Annual Four Chaplains Awards Banquet on February 5, 2026. Congratulations on your recognition from the city.

**Independence Seaport Museum's Teen Ambassadors program** received an **Institutional Award of Merit** from PA Museums. The Teen Ambassador program is a paid work and learning experience for Philadelphia teens entering 10th-12th grades, the program uses a humanities-driven STEM model with the goal of providing students with a holistic understanding of the history and science of the Delaware River. Teen Ambassadors receive training in community-driven leadership and development, as well as research, public speaking, and informal education. College and career-readiness and financial literacy lessons are also built into the curriculum. The Teen Ambassadors program reaffirms the museum's commitment and dedication not only to educating students but also to successfully positioning them as leaders in their schools, communities, and future endeavors. Congratulations!



### Maritime Exchange Membership

A membership in the Exchange is not about joining another association. It is about partnering with a respected and successful regional business team that makes a significant difference.

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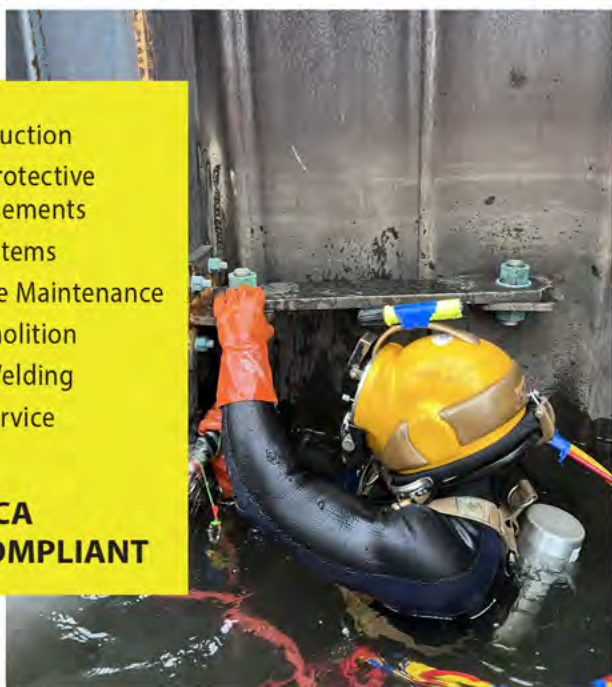


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## Calendar of Events

- 05/04 Seamen's Church Institute 15th Invitational Golf Classic  
11:00 a.m. Registration and Lunch, Talamore Country Club  
723 Talamore Drive, Ambler, PA 19002  
[Register](#)
- 05/12 The Chamber of Commerce for Greater Philadelphia – A Conversation With the Governor, 4:30 p.m – 7:00 p.m.  
The Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University  
[Register](#)
- 05/13 Maritime Exchange Board & Organizational Meetings, 11:30 a.m.
- 05/21 Independence Seaport Museum Cocktails & Crustaceans  
6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m., Penn's Landing, 211 Columbus Boulevard  
Philadelphia, PA, 19106, [Register here](#)
- 06/06 Seamen's Center of Wilmington Final Voyage Tug Cruise 2026  
5:30 p.m., Port of Wilmington  
Contact [scw@scw.org](mailto:scw@scw.org)
- 06/10 Maritime Exchange Executive Committee Meeting, 11:00 a.m.
- 07/08 Maritime Exchange Board Meeting, 11:30 a.m.
- 07/15 Area Maritime Security Committee General Meeting  
9:30 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.  
Contact: [Glena Tredinnick](#)
- 08/04-06 North American Maritime Ministry Association Conference  
Philadelphia Marriott Old City, 1 Dock Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106  
[Register](#)
- 08/12 Maritime Exchange Executive Committee Meeting, 11:00 a.m.
- 09/09 Maritime Exchange Board Meeting, 11:30 a.m.
- 09/11 Ports of Philadelphia Maritime Society Annual Russ Larsen Memorial Golf Outing, Springfield Country Club, Springfield, PA  
Contact: [PPMS](#)
- Ports of Philadelphia Maritime Society Annual Crab Feast  
Ft. Mifflin, 6400 Hog Island Road, Philadelphia, PA 19153  
Contact: [PPMS](#)
- 10/14 Maritime Exchange Executive Committee Meeting, 11:00 a.m.
- 10/21 Area Maritime Security Committee General Meeting  
9:30 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.  
USCG Sector Delaware Bay, 1 Washington Avenue  
Philadelphia, PA 19147  
Contact: [Glena Tredinnick](#)

For a complete schedule and event details, visit [www.maritimedelriv.com](http://www.maritimedelriv.com).



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