

## **U.S. Senators Tammy Baldwin, David Vitter, and Tim Kaine's MARITIME AND ENERGY WORKFORCE TECHNICAL TRAINING ENHANCEMENT ACT**

The strength of the United States as a maritime nation relies on its global, coastal and inland commercial fleet, its ports and intermodal facilities, Defense and Homeland Security agencies, and the maritime workforce that supports and operates U.S.-flagged vessels. The marine transportation system is a core component of our economic and national security, and it is vital to the growing domestic energy industry. In fact, according to statistics reported by the Maritime Administration in recent years, as much as 95 percent of U.S. foreign trade is moved by ship, and foreign trade comprises a greatly increasing share of our Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

While the maritime workforce has proven to be strong and resilient, there is a need to upgrade the skills and capacity of the industry to ensure the future viability of the Merchant Marine. In addition, the surge in domestic energy production is driving much of the interest in maritime workforce. Many energy sector jobs require technical training offered by community and technical colleges.

The *Maritime and Energy Workforce Technical Training Enhancement Act*, introduced by Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), David Vitter (R-LA) and Tim Kaine (D-VA) would authorize creation of a new program to address these challenges. The bill authorizes \$12 million in each of the next three fiscal years to support two programs to help community and technical colleges, as well as public four-year institutions, bolster their job training efforts in the maritime and energy industries through:

### **Maritime and Energy Workforce Training Grants**

The bill authorizes the Secretary of Energy to make grants (between \$1 and \$1.5 million) to eligible colleges to expand maritime and energy workforce training programs, including by admitting more students, training faculty, expanding facilities, creating maritime career pathways from associate to baccalaureate degrees, awarding credit for prior learning experience, or increasing cooperation with federal agencies. The grants are provided for three-year periods.

These grants may be used for:

- Training related to maritime transportation, logistics, supply chain management, shipbuilding and ship repair;
- Enhancement of workforce training, to include certifications and apprenticeships, for relevant maritime employment categories, such as tankerman, deckhand, and able body seaman;
- Salary supplementation for faculty in maritime training;
- Operation of ship simulators, fire suppression equipment, marine fueling equipment, and measuring and sampling instruments;
- Acquisition of maritime training equipment;
- Renovation or construction of buildings used in maritime training (limited to 50% of any grant award); and
- Tuition reimbursement for successful completion of a maritime course, program, or certification.

### **Centers of Excellence**

The bill authorizes grants (of no more than \$1.5 million) for up to 10 colleges to establish Centers of Excellence (COE) in maritime and energy workforce training, to expand workforce training opportunities, and to assist with job placement. It gives priority to colleges with an existing partnership with federal agencies or other public or private partners. The bill also allows each COE to use grants to develop an agenda for maritime and energy training; fund expansion of maritime and energy training and education; or publish or otherwise disseminate findings relating to best practices in maritime and energy training and education.

To be eligible for either program, an institution must be a community college or other public postsecondary educational institution located in close proximity to marine or port facilities in the Gulf of Mexico, Atlantic Ocean, Pacific Ocean, or Great Lakes offering a maritime training and education program, and which has an established association with a port authority or other established seaport or inland port facility, as well as an appropriate federal or other government agency (such as the Departments of Energy, Homeland Security, or Transportation). The institution must also provide for an admissions preference for veterans.