Acting Sec. Su, Navy Sec. Del Toro Highlight Workforce Development, National Security at Newport News' Apprentice School

Toured site of PCU John F. Kennedy's construction, world's most capable, adaptable carrier

From the U.S. Department of Labor, Aug. 29, 2025

WASHINGTON – Acting Secretary of Labor Julie Su and Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro visited Virginia today to see how the Apprentice School in Newport News – one of the nation's critical apprenticeship programs – is making construction of one of the world's most capable and adaptable aircraft carriers, the PCU John F. Kennedy, possible.

During their visit, Secretaries Su and Del Toro highlighted their shared commitment to strengthening the Department of Defense's organic and industrial base workforce.

"Our partnership with the U.S. Navy will enhance the quality of jobs for workers who play an essential role in protecting our nation," said Acting Secretary of Labor Julie Su. "The Department of Labor is committed to making sure our Navy has the strongest, most diverse and skilled workforce needed to ensure military readiness and modernization."

The U.S. Navy and the Department of Labor have partnered to help advance Secretary Del Toro's Maritime Statecraft Initiative and to create high-quality, good-paying jobs critical to national security, using practices included in the departments of Labor and Commerce's Good Jobs Principles to

fill the estimated 10,000 jobs needed per year over the next 10 years in the growing maritime industry.

“The U.S. Navy’s investments in the highest possible job quality for its workforce will help to reinvigorate America’s comprehensive maritime power,” said Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro. “With skilled workers who represent the best of America, the defense industrial base and maritime ecosystem will continue to thrive with an ingenuity and dedication recognized around the world.”

Good Jobs Principles seek to create broad, equitable access to good jobs and attract the most diverse pool of talent possible, by reaching into traditionally underserved populations and communities. By doing so, the departments of Labor and Defense intend to build the skilled, diverse and ready workforce needed to strengthen the U.S. Navy in an era of intense strategic competition.

As part of his Maritime Statecraft strategy, Secretary Del Toro is rallying organized labor as an essential stakeholder in ensuring America’s maritime power. Currently, the Navy is piloting a program to train experienced union welders to join a rotational expeditionary workforce that deploys to shipyards nationwide to support naval objectives. In October, the first class of 169 union welders will begin work on PCU John F. Kennedy at Newport News.

In this joint effort, the departments will pursue the following key outcomes:

- Expanded equitable workforce development pathways to good jobs through pre-apprenticeship and Registered Apprenticeship programs.

- Broader active partnership with the Department of Labor’s Job Corps program.

- Developed and expanded partnerships with agencies, including the department’s Employment and Training Administration, Veterans Employment and Training Service, and Women’s Bureau to advance to advance workforce development initiatives aligned with the Good Jobs Principles.

Founded in 1919, the Apprentice School at Newport News Shipbuilding offers eight advanced programs of study and apprenticeships in 19 shipbuilding disciplines for terms from four to eight years. Offering apprentices the opportunity to earn college credit, receive competitive pay and benefits and learn a trade, the institution is accredited by the Commission of the Council on Occupational Education and registered with the Virginia Apprenticeship Council. The Apprentice School is a Department of Labor Apprenticeship Ambassador.