Annual Anchors Aweigh Fly-In Spreads Sea Services Knowledge Across Capitol Hill



Sen. Todd Young of Indiana greets Navy League CEO Mike Stevens during the Anchors Aweigh Fly-In. *Photo credit: James Peterson*

Navy League members from across the country fanned out across Capitol Hill on June 2 as part of the annual Anchors Away Fly-In, where they educated lawmakers and their staff on the importance of sea service budgets and policy.

They presented congressional representatives with data about sea service budgets and requirements, and urged predictable spending levels, multi-year procurement programs and moving away from continuing resolutions, which have slowed down shipbuilding.

They also urged support for the Maritime Security Trust Fund,

which would provide long-term mandatory funding outside of the annual appropriations cycle for merchant mariners and would help rebuild facilities and education for maritime academies.

The Navy Leaguers also urged members to cosponsor legislation including the SHIPs for America Act, the Pay Our Troops Act and the SERVE Act. Among budget issues, they urged support for a $50 billion annual shipbuilding budget and a $20 billion annual Coast Guard budget.

“The day was great. We saw three principals and three staffers, for a total of six, and most were friends of the Navy League,” National President Larry Salter said at a reception following the day of meetings.

Salter said his team emphasized support of the SHIPs for America Act, aimed at revitalizing the U.S. maritime industry, but most of the people they visited were supporters or even co-writers of the legislation.

“It was a friendly crew and it was great to emphasize what we are doing,” Salter said.



Navy League members fanned out across House and Senate office buildings to discuss the needs of the sea services. *Photo credit: James Peterson*

Ed Duffet of the Denver Council was on his second Fly-In visit, and this year was the sole representative of the Rocky Mountain region, doing his six meetings as a one-man band. He had high praise for the Navy League Legislative Affairs team.

“Everything’s set. They give you the briefing, they give you everything you might need to hand out to folks, they tell you tips and tricks,” he said, and members can leave knowing they made a difference.

“I’m coming back again. This was so much fun,” he said. “… This is a joy. If they had it twice a year I’d come twice a year.”

Taylor Smith came from the Portland-Blueback Council and attended nine meetings, including in-person sessions with Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-Oregon) and Rep. Cliff Bentz (R-District 2).

“Everybody was very receptive to all the information we

presented, especially regarding the SHIPs for America Act, it seems like a lot of support for that across the board," Smith said. "It all seemed very positive overall and was a great trip."

"It was remarkably successful," said Randall Myers of the Mobile Council.

His group met with five of the seven staffs from Alabama, and "we're all in agreement that we need a state-level maritime security board, so we're doing some things nobody else is doing, primarily to push forward and provide the support that the U.S. group needs at the state level, so we're kind of working from the bottom up while they're pushing these various acts," he said.

The Fly In is a big part of one of the Navy League's core missions, that of advocating for the sea services, Salter said.

"The members get to meet other members, meet some of their elected officials, and they get to discuss what's important for them and the Navy League in supporting sea services," he said.