

# HII Executive Addresses Trickle Down Effect of CRs on Defense Workforce



HII Executive Vice President and President of Ingalls Shipbuilding Kari Wilkinson addressed her company's steadfast workforce, despite pandemic challenges. LISA NIPP

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. – The extended continuing resolutions in place of enacted funding affect shipbuilders "much the same as our customers," but HII deals with it by working closely with the Navy and trying to get an earlier start on programs, Kari Wilkinson, executive vice president of HII and president of Ingalls Shipbuilding, said at the April 4 lunch keynote.

HII is the new brand name for the company formerly known as Huntington Ingalls Industries. Speaking at the Navy League's 2022 Sea-Air-Space exposition, Wilkinson said an increasing priority for the shipbuilder is retaining its skilled work force and attracting a new generation of workers. Even through the months of pandemic restrictions when many other employees were working from home, 64,000 shipbuilders walked through the gates at HII facilities every day. "They are the best of America," she said.

To keep that essential work force, HII is reaching out to different communities to recruit new workers. As a result, "Today, we have the most diverse work force ever," Wilkinson said, and none of those skilled craftsmen and women are easily replaced.

The chronic problem of congressional failure to pass defense appropriations bills on time complicates the effort to keep HII's work force, on top of the problems it creates in production efficiency and program affordability, she told the audience. Wilkinson also cited the challenges of keeping costs down when the Navy or Congress extends the time between new production of existing ship classes. In the interest of efficiency and affordability, "we like to see ships a lot closer" in start times, she told reporters after her speech.