HII Names Kari Wilkinson to Lead Newport News Shipbuilding



Jennifer Boykin to Retire; Brian Blanchette to Lead Ingalls Shipbuilding

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NEWPORT NEWS, Va., Nov. 06, 2024 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) — HII (NYSE: HII), the nation's largest military shipbuilder, announced today that its Board of Directors has elected Kari Wilkinson to serve as president of the company's Newport News Shipbuilding (NNS) division, effective Jan. 1, 2025. She will succeed Jennifer Boykin, who is retiring from her position at year's end after 37 years with the company.

The president of NNS, which is HII's largest division, oversees more than 26,000 shipbuilders who design, build, and maintain the world's most complex ships: nuclear-powered aircraft carriers and nuclear-powered submarines.

“I have asked Jennifer to stay on in an advisory capacity through March to support a seamless transition to Kari,” HII CEO and President Chris Kastner said. “You will not find a more loyal advocate than Jennifer for her shipbuilders and the Hampton Roads community. Kari’s leadership has steered Ingalls Shipbuilding into its next phase of growth, having secured serial production contracts for both the destroyer and amphibious ship programs. She is a tremendous leader and now brings her great energy and expertise to Newport News.”

Wilkinson becomes the 21st president of NNS, which was founded in 1886. She has served as president of HII’s Ingalls Shipbuilding division since 2021, where she has overseen the U.S. Navy’s amphibious assault and surface combatant ship programs, and the division’s 11,000 shipbuilders. The two shipyards make HII the largest industrial employer in both Virginia and Mississippi.

Photos accompanying this release are available at: https://hii.com/news/hii-names-kari-wilkinson-to-lead-newport-news-shipbuilding/.

“Leading shipbuilders in the critical work we do for the nation has been and will continue to be the greatest honor of my life,” Wilkinson said. “I join the Newport News team with deep respect for its nuclear culture, commitment to safety, and an exceptional legacy further strengthened by Jennifer and the NNS team. I am fully committed to advancing our mission in support of our sailors, their families, and for all of us who depend on them for freedom and security.”

Under Wilkson’s leadership Ingalls Shipbuilding secured the recent $9.6 billion multi-ship procurement contract for construction of three *San Antonio-class* (LPD 17) amphibious ships, and contract modification for the next *America-class* (LHA 6) large-deck amphibious ship.

Elected to succeed Kari as executive vice president of HII and

president of Ingalls Shipbuilding, overseeing all programs and operations, is Brian Blanchette, who has served as vice president of quality and engineering at Ingalls since May 2021. Blanchette joined Ingalls in 1996 and has served in a range of roles including in technical and design engineering, program management and business development.

“I am honored and humbled by the opportunity to lead Ingalls Shipbuilding and its dedicated shipbuilders,” Blanchette said. “Throughout my 28-year career at Ingalls, I’ve had the privilege of working with and learning from remarkable people at every level. My focus will be to build on my predecessors’ success, particularly Kari’s, and to carry forward our strong shipbuilding legacy and honor our commitment to our nation by delivering the quality ships our service members depend on.”

Jennifer Boykin will retire from HII having steered its largest division through a period of remarkable growth and change. Highlights of Boykin’s legacy include:

Widely credited for leadership and continuous production through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Led the transformation from digital design to digital construction first on *Enterprise* (CVN 80) and for the *Columbia*-class submarine program.

Guided the company’s achievement of the first two-ship aircraft carrier procurement in over 30 years for *Enterprise* (CVN 80) and *Doris Miller* (CVN 81).

Secured with our teaming partner the largest shipbuilding contract in U.S. Navy history for *Virginia-class* submarines.

Known throughout Hampton Roads for her deep community engagement and commitment to diversity within the workforce and leadership team.