

# SECNAV Del Toro Calls on Industry and Academia to Help Restore the Nation's Competitive Shipbuilding and Repair Landscape

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Calling it a strategic imperative, Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro urged industry and academia to join efforts to restore the Nation's competitive shipbuilding and repair landscape. Secretary Del Toro delivered the remarks at the NDIA Delaware Valley Chapter (NDIA-DVC) Naval Nuclear Submarine and Aircraft Carrier Suppliers' Conference at Drexel University in Philadelphia, Dec. 14.

"I'm here at this conference today because I believe in the potential of our joint efforts to get shipbuilding and maintenance right. It is my number one priority," said Secretary Del Toro. "While the vision is ambitious, it is achievable. We are a nation accustomed to taking on ambitious endeavors, and restoring our maritime strength is no exception."

To do so, requires a multi-pronged approach, Secretary Del Toro stated, including investing in the revitalization of our shipbuilding industry and merchant marine fleet, developing innovative technologies to maintain our naval edge, strengthening partnerships with key allies to counter China's growing influence, and promoting fair competition.

## Call to Action

The Department of the Navy's commitment to innovation and rapid technology development presents an attractive opportunity for industry participation, stated Secretary Del Toro. For example,

Pennsylvania alone boasts more than 570 vital submarine industrial base suppliers, 39 of which are classified as critical. In the past five years, the Department of the Navy (DON) invested more than \$250 million to build capacity, increase capability, and add resiliency to these suppliers.

The Department of the Navy added 1,000 new small businesses by investing nearly \$2 billion dollars through initiatives led by the Office of Small Business Programs to the Navy-industry team.

"Now, the key is to help find and train the right people, and our Talent Pipeline Initiative has been instrumental in addressing workforce shortages," said Secretary Del Toro.

Philadelphia, for instance, was the first location for the DON's pilot program, which it has since expanded to Pittsburgh and other locations. Since its launch in 2021, this initiative has placed more than 1,200 skilled workers with Pennsylvania suppliers, with over 698 placed in fiscal year 2023 alone.

"We are also committed to expanding apprenticeship programs, as evidenced by the recent reinstatement of the Philadelphia Shipyard's program—previously suspended since 2017—currently training over 100 workers," said Secretary Del Toro.

High-paying, high-skilled "new-collar" jobs that restore America's manufacturing prowess are a priority of this Administration, added Secretary Del Toro, combining traditionally blue-collar trades with cutting-edge technologies.

“We must establish programs that build capacity in fields like naval architecture, engineering, and lifecycle management, as well as technical expertise in nuclear welding, robotics, software management, and additive manufacturing,” said Secretary Del Toro. “Your work on these programs will be invaluable to developing and rebuilding our nation’s shipbuilding landscape. Everyone here has a part to play in these efforts—and it is a strategic imperative that we rise to the occasion.”