

Support Grows for SHIPYARD Act, Wicker Says



The ballistic missile submarine USS West Virginia (SSBN 736), front, departs from Norfolk Naval Shipyard in Portsmouth, Va., Oct. 24, 2013, following a refueling and overhaul. The West Virginia was homeported at Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay, Ga. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication 2nd Class Ernest R. Scott*

WASHINGTON – Last week, Sen. Roger Wicker, R-Mississippi, introduced the SHIPYARD Act of 2021, which would provide \$21 billion to make upgrades to the U.S. Navy's four public shipyards and \$4 billion for private shipyards in the U.S. that support the Navy fleet, the senator's spokesman said in a May 6 release. The legislation is now sponsored by eight senators, including Tim Kaine, D-Virginia, Susan Collins, R-Maine, Angus King, I-Maine, Jeanne Shaheen, D-New Hampshire, Richard Blumenthal, D-Connecticut, Tom Cotton, R-Arkansas, and Maggie Hassan, D-New Hampshire.

The senators' legislation has been praised by Navy leaders, scholars, and private industry as a promising investment in the nation's defense infrastructure.

Here is what they are saying:

Acting Secretary of the Navy Thomas Harker – "I believe the Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Plan – right now, it's a 20-year plan that's upward of \$20 billion – is something that we could look at accelerating if additional funds were available. ... I know there's been talk by different folks on the Hill about putting that into the infrastructure bill. It's something that we would appreciate the opportunity to accelerate that program because it is very critical to our success moving forward." – USNI News, April 29, 2021

Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Michael Gilday – "As the

secretary said – this is a once-in-a-century opportunity to upgrade these facilities. And we have to. We're putting new submarines in the water – Virginia-class Block IIIs and Block IVs – they're larger submarines. We need to be able to get them in dry docks." – USNI News, April 29, 2021

Matthew Paxton, president, Shipbuilders Council of America – "As China and Russia are aggressively building their commercial and naval fleets to directly compete with the U.S., bolstering America's naval defense capabilities is more vital now than ever to protect our national security. The SHIPYARD Act will provide much-needed investment into critical shipyard infrastructure and the U.S. industrial base that builds, maintains and repairs our Navy. We applaud Sens. Wicker, Kaine, Collins, King, Shaheen, Blumenthal, Cotton, and Hassan for working in a bipartisan manner to strengthen our domestic and national security through the SHIPYARD Act."

Mike Stevens, National Executive Director of the Navy League of the United States and 13th Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy – "Investment in the Navy's four public shipyards is essential to the sustainment of our nation's nuclear aircraft carriers and submarines. Investment in new construction and repair shipyards is vital to expanding and maintaining a seafaring force capable of competing in a new era of great power rivalry. The SHIPYARD Act provides these necessary investments at a critical moment in American naval history."

Former Sen. Jim Talent and Lindsey R. Neas – "A bipartisan group of legislators has sponsored a bill that has the potential to address at one stroke a first-order priority for American national security: upgrading and expanding the nation's shipyards. ... The bill would fund in one year the Navy's \$21 billion recapitalization plan for shipyards, enabling the Navy to authorize shipyard improvements as capacity became available to make them and to do so with flexibility and therefore in the shortest possible time...The SHIPYARD Act is an outstanding first step on the path to

revitalizing America's sea power." – National Review, May 3, 2021

Brent D. Sadler and Maiya Clark, Heritage Foundation – "If we are going to make an investment in America, the four government-owned, government-operated Navy shipyards are great candidates for infrastructure spending. ... One bipartisan proposal by Sens. Roger Wicker, Tim Kaine, Susan Collins, Angus King and Jeanne Shaheen (with companion legislation in the House by Reps. Rob Wittman and Mike Gallagher) would use the Defense Production Act to fund the entire SIOP with a one-time, \$21 billion payment to the Navy. Such a move would provide the Navy access to consistent funding it needs to ensure it can bring its shipyards up to date. ... Efforts to reverse the slow erosion of the nation's shipyards are a welcome change to decades of divestiture of naval infrastructure." – The Heritage Foundation, May 4, 2021

Dr. Jerry Hendrix, Captain (Ret.) U.S. Navy – "I am so pleased that leaders such as Sen. Wicker are looking at the shipbuilding industrial base as a critical component of our national security infrastructure in this time of great power competition."