



CONSORTIUM OF STATE MARITIME ACADEMIES  
California • Maine • Massachusetts • Michigan • New York • Texas

**STATE MARITIME ACADEMIES HELP SOLVE  
THE NATIONAL MARINER SHORTAGE**

Combined, the six State Maritime Academies (SMAs) produce approximately 75% of the new licensed maritime officers in the United States each year.<sup>1</sup> As such, the SMAs play an important role in helping address the national mariner shortage, a workforce crisis for military sealift and readiness. Funded mainly by student tuition and state monies, the SMAs also benefit from federal programs, vessels, and funding approved by Congress. In FY '25, SMA priorities include the following:

***Shore-Side Infrastructure Funding***—\$75 million in FY '25 is necessary to meet MARAD requirements for berthing of the National Security Multi-Mission Vessels (NSMVs), the new fleet of state-of-the-art training ships. The NSMV series construction continues at the Philly Shipyard. The second NSMV, the *TS Patriot State* based at Massachusetts Maritime Academy, is expected to sail this summer.

***Fuel Funding***—As the NSMVs are delivered to the SMAs the cost of fuel per school will increase significantly. The fuel is used mainly for the vessels during the cadet sea terms to provide cadets with sea time required for mariner licensure. SMA cadets pay directly for cadet sea terms; they are not part of annual SMA tuition. The high cost of the sea terms is one important factor in the mariner shortage. The SMAs request \$9.8 million in funding in FY '25.

***Student Incentive Payments (SIP)***—Last year Congress increased the SIP program to \$16,000/year and up to \$64,000 over four years (per cadet) in return for an obligation to maintain a valid license as an officer in the U.S. merchant marine for at least six years following graduation from an SMA and to serve as a commissioned officer in the U.S. Naval Reserve, the U.S. Coast Guard Reserve, or any other Reserve unit of an armed force for at least six years following graduation. This SIP money goes to the cadets; the increased SIP levels make it easier for the SMAs to recruit new cadets in general, and particularly to help attract economically disadvantaged candidates. For FY '25, the SMAs request \$4.8 million for SIP.

***A New Military to Mariner Program for Veterans at SMAs***—To help address the mariner shortage, the SMAs propose allowing military veterans with bachelor's degrees to complete a merchant marine officer preparation program at a SMA, without earning a SMA degree, in fewer than three years. Many former members of the military, and particularly the Navy, have extensive at-sea training and are interested in building on that training by earning a merchant mariner's license. The new program will require legislative changes.

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<sup>1</sup> The six SMAs are California Maritime Academy in Vallejo, CA, Great Lakes Maritime Academy in Traverse City, MI, Maine Maritime Academy in Castine, ME, Massachusetts Maritime Academy in Buzzards Bay, MA, State University of New York Maritime Academy in Bronx, NY, and Texas A&M Maritime Academy in Galveston, TX.