

With Order, Trump Eases Path for Transition to Merchant Marine



ARLINGTON, Va. – President Trump has issued an executive order easing the path for active-duty military personnel and veterans who want to transition to service as merchant mariners, a move designed to open jobs to veterans while strengthening national security.

The executive order, issued March 4, stated its purpose as promoting “employment opportunities for United States military veterans while growing the cadre of trained ... mariners available to meet ... requirements for national and economic security.”

Many current and former sailors and Coast Guardsmen have extensive experience in ship-handling, navigation and engineering applicable to service in the merchant marine, but in the past, they have faced bureaucratic obstacles and expenses in the thousands of dollars to make the transition.

“It is the policy of the United States to support practices and programs that ensure that members of the United States armed forces receive appropriate credit for their military training and experience, upon request, toward credentialing requirements as a merchant mariner,” the order stated. “It is further the policy of the United States to establish and maintain an effective merchant marine program by providing sufficient support and resources to active-duty and separating service members who pursue or possess merchant mariner credentials.”

The order continued: “A robust merchant marine is vital to the national and economic security of the United States.

Credentialed United States merchant mariners support domestic and international trade, are critical for strategic defensive and offensive military sealift operations and bring added expertise to federal vessel operations. Unfortunately, the United States faces a shortage of qualified merchant mariners. As our strategic competitors expand their global footprint, the United States must retain its ability to project and sustain forces globally. This capability requires a sufficient corps of credentialed merchant mariners available to crew the necessary sealift fleet. Attracting additional trained and credentialed mariners, particularly from active-duty service members and military veterans, will support ... national security requirements and provide meaningful, well-paying jobs to ... veterans.”

Trump ordered the secretaries of defense and homeland security to, within a year, identify all military training and experience within the applicable service that may qualify for merchant mariner credentialing and submit a list of military training and experience to the Coast Guard National Maritime Center to determine whether such training and experience counts for credentialing purposes.

The secretaries also are to provide for waiver of licensing fees for active-duty personnel and pay for Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC) cards.

Buono Named New U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Superintendent

WASHINGTON – Maritime Administrator Mark Buzby announced Jack Buono as the new superintendent for the U.S. Merchant Marine

Academy Nov. 2. Buono will take command at the academy on Nov. 9. He most recently served as president and CEO of ExxonMobil's shipping subsidiary, SeaRiver Maritime Inc.

"As a Kings Point graduate who spent his entire career in maritime leadership roles, Mr. Buono will help educate and inspire the next generation of maritime cadets," Buzby said.

Following his graduation from the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, Buono worked his way up from a U.S. Coast Guard-licensed third mate to an unlimited master mariner with ExxonMobil Corp. In 1991, he transferred ashore and, after rising through several management positions, was elected to president and CEO of SeaRiver, where he served until his retirement in 2016 after 38 years with ExxonMobil and SeaRiver.

"Jack Buono is the ideal candidate to take the Academy to the next level," Buzby said. "He has impeccable credentials on the waterfront and, as an alumnus, fully understands the academy's mission to provide its students with the highest caliber of training and education needed to lead afloat and ashore."

Buono received a Bachelor of Science in marine transportation with a minor in management from the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy in 1978 and was commissioned an ensign in the U.S. Naval Reserve, where he served for 11 years.

The U.S. Merchant Marine Academy at Kings Point, New York is one of the five federal service academies. This year, it celebrates its 75th anniversary, having been dedicated in September 1943 to provide the nation with a steady source of highly trained merchant marine officers and naval reserve officers. Today, graduates serve not only in the commercial merchant marine, but also on active duty in all branches of the armed forces.

The U.S. Department of Transportation's Maritime Administration is responsible for overseeing the U.S. Merchant

Marine Academy, including the hiring of key academy positions. As part of the selection process, Buono met with a number of midshipmen, faculty and staff from the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, in addition to alumni and industry leaders.