

USMMA Board of Visitors Meeting

Kings Point, NY

Statement of Captain T. Christian Spain

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I would first like to commend Senator Wicker and Congressman King for holding this important meeting today.

My name is Christian Spain I represent American Maritime Officers in Washington, however, this morning I am honored to also represent the Marine Engineers Beneficial Association, the Seafarers International Union and Masters, Mates & Pilots. Together we represent roughly 90% of the American Merchant Mariners that work on ocean going vessels and we have been united on the SASH issue since the sea year has been suspended.

As a little background I graduated from the Academy in 1994. Before I began working in Washington I sailed deep-sea for about 2 decades; for 10 years between 1999 and 2014 I sailed as Master. I also have spent a few years ashore working as a fleet manager for of 16 US flagged vessels. My entire adult life has been spent in the US maritime industry.

In response to published articles that allege permissive campus attitudes toward sexual harassment and sexual assault are being formed by experiences during the Sea Year, industry leaders reached out and met with the leadership at DOT to change that perception and to pledge their support to work together with DOT and MARAD staffs to address their concerns. Company and union presidents pointed to their long-term commitment to zero tolerance and their existing procedures for addressing sexual harassment and sexual assault.

The cadets need to be back on all commercial vessels before the end of the year. Labor and the Companies have worked together with MARAD and the Secretary's office since the U.S. Maritime Industry meeting called by MARAD in June. Within days of the meeting Labor and the Companies have been calling on DOT to provide a plan for putting the cadets back on the ships in short order. This culminated in the creation of MARAD's Shipboard Climate Compliance Team (SCCT). The Companies have bent over backwards to provide constructive input in the creation of the SCCT and its criteria as well submitting of packages for review by the SCCT. To date no company has been cleared by the SCCT even though this process started in late June of this year.

One SASH incident is too many. Our companies have had harassment policies and procedures in place for more than 2 decades. The U.S. Maritime Industry is onboard with MARAD's plans to improve these company policies and procedures with regard to SASH; but, we do not see why this must be an obstacle to returning the cadets to

the vessels. We stand ready to address any problems that are found through the SCCT processes or the LMI study; however, a quest for perfection should not delay the return of the cadets to commercial vessels. Again in successive meetings with MARAD and Secretary's office the U.S. Maritime Industry has reiterated the need to get cadets back on the vessels in a 60 day time period.

The U.S. Maritime Industry sees the continuation of the sea year suspension as an existential threat to the Academy and by extension to the US flagged deep-sea fleet. The Academy graduates more than 25% of all the STCW qualified unlimited licensed engineers a year. We cannot afford the risk to the school that increases every day that the suspension is in place, particularly with no defined timeline to return the cadets to the vessels. For months there has been an unwillingness or inability to provide a target date to return the cadets to the vessels. Some administration officials have used 60 days; others have said several months. Looking at the RFI posted by MARAD, the contractor LMI has 60 days to complete their Campus Climate Survey; however, there is also a dash 8 clause allowing for at least one 6 month extension of the contract which might stretch to May 2017. In short there is currently no definitive deadline to work towards, yet an issue as serious as this demands one.

The U.S. Maritime Industry has asked the DOT to involve us in the preliminary findings from the LMI Campus Climate Survey so we can work with the staff on corrective actions that are within our domain as early as possible. We think it is

especially important when findings have to be “operationalized” for practical application in the fleet, which, considering the diversity of our fleet, can take considerable time. Our goal is being prepared to submit our proposals as soon as the last relevant finding is known, to reduce any delay in reinstating the sea year.

Labor and the Companies believe a great deal of the academy’s future rests on reinstating the sea year. We need these newly licensed officers to help offset retirements resulting from our aging workforce. This is not only an economic security issue; it has an overriding national security aspect. Our military war plans are completely dependent on our mariners manning the sealift ships to carry the materiel the military needs to fight a war—just as it has in every war since the revolution. Unfortunately, our numbers have shrunk to the point that we believe we can only man the reserve sealift fleet for about four months. This is a relatively new development over the past two years and makes it imperative that we keep a steady flow of young officers into the fleet with an eye toward rebuilding our numbers.

Labor stands ready to work with our Companies, MARAD and the office of the Secretary to do whatever it takes to get the cadets back on the ships before the end of this year.

Thank you