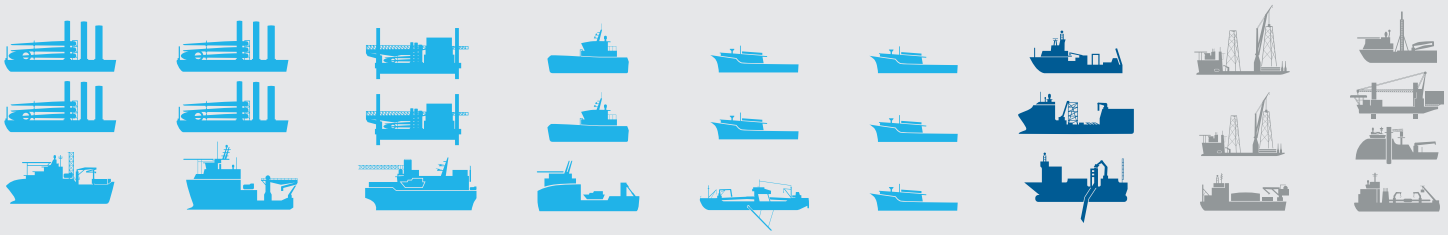
Offshore Wind and Maritime Crewing

The maritime crewing provision included in the House Coast Guard Authorization bill would halt the offshore wind industry.



The majority of the over 25 vessels needed per offshore wind project will be U.S.-flagged.

US Ships Mixed International Ships

As currently written, the House maritime crewing provision would require, within 120 days of passage, that crews on specialized offshore international construction vessels match the flag of the vessel or be American mariners as a condition of working on the U.S. Outer Continental Shelf. Given the nascent domestic offshore wind industry, there are currently insufficient numbers of trained American mariners, as well as crew from the vessel's flag state, to man those vessels. The current House provision is not reflective of this reality. The crewing provision would thus serve to block the use of these international specialized offshore vessels, and there are virtually no U.S.-flagged specialized construction vessels to do the work needed. As a result, the House crewing provision would halt domestic offshore wind farm installation.

A Majority of Offshore Wind Vessels will be American Built and Manned

A focus on specialized construction vessels, which make up a small subset of the vessels used in deployment of offshore wind, also draws attention away from the fact that a majority of the vessels used by the offshore wind industry will be made in America (see graphic above) and crewed by U.S. mariners. Of the over 25 vessels used to construct, operate, and maintain an offshore wind project, including seafloor survey work, component transfer, turbine installation, and operations and maintenance, the majority will be U.S.-flagged and -crewed. In addition to the number of vessels, U.S.-flagged vessels, such as crew transfer vessels and service operations vessels, will have the greatest amount of vessel *hours* because they will perform all transportation activities between U.S. ports and offshore wind turbines during the approximately 35-year lifetime of a project. These activities over the multiple *years* of project operations will dwarf the *months* of construction engaged in by international ships on offshore wind energy projects, meaning American mariners will perform the vast majority of the job hours needed.

The Current House Maritime Crewing Provision Poses Unacceptable Safety Risks

The House maritime crewing provision would mandate that international construction vessels switch their crew for one that is American or citizens of the nation where the vessel is flagged. Effectively requiring a full-scale replacement of these vessel crew with mariners lacking the experience for the specific work required poses serious safety risks to crew and operations. As these vessels operate heavy machinery during rough seas and often require millimeters of accuracy, this poses unacceptable safety risks to using the vessels that are necessary to construct offshore wind energy and, in turn, would effectively halt this nascent industry in the U.S., jeopardizing the creation of up to 83,000 domestic jobs by 2030.[1]

Offshore Wind is a Key Part of our Domestic Energy Future

Ultimately, the offshore wind industry and Congress have the same goal: maximizing the number of Americans employed in offshore wind. This includes mariners. Building out the domestic offshore wind industry will pay enormous economic development benefits and aggressive deployment of offshore wind will make a material contribution to our domestic energy security. But we cannot impose impossible mandates on the industry that will severely limit this potential. Unfortunately, the current House maritime crewing provision does just that. The offshore wind industry would appreciate the opportunity to work with Congress to achieve our shared objectives of realizing the domestic energy security, climate, economic and employment benefits offshore wind can provide.

"Just like you wouldn't substitute a 747 airliner pilot for a F-15 fighter jet pilot, offshore wind construction vessels need specialized crews with vessel-specific expertise."

Steve Dayney
Head of Offshore North America, Siemens Gamesa Renewable Energy Inc

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[1] U.S. Offshore Wind Economic Impact Assessment. 2020. ACP. https://cleanpower.org/resources/u-s-offshore-wind-economic-impact-assessment/