



Statement for the Record
Association for Uncrewed Vehicle Systems International (AUVSI)

U.S. Senate
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
Subcommittee on Coast Guard, Maritime, and Fisheries
"Sea Change: Reviving Commercial Shipbuilding"

October 28, 2025
10:00 AM
Washington, DC

Chairman Sullivan, Ranking Member Blunt Rochester, and Members of the Subcommittee:

On behalf of the Association for Uncrewed Vehicle Systems International (AUVSI) and our members, we would like to express our gratitude for holding this important hearing on the critical need for revitalizing the U.S. commercial shipbuilding industry to support the safe and efficient integration of uncrewed maritime systems (UMS) into the nation's maritime transportation system (MTS). This hearing is timely, and we applaud you for conducting this important oversight.

AUVSI is the world's largest industry association representing over 400 corporations and 8,000 professionals across more than 60 allied countries in industry, government and academia. Our members span the defense, civil, and commercial sectors. Today, we submit testimony to the Subcommittee on Coast Guard, Maritime, and Fisheries representing our UMS members, including uncrewed surface vehicles (USVs) and uncrewed underwater vehicles (UUV) maritime operations.

Maritime security and efficiency demand vigilance, innovation, and progress. We must address two key questions:

1. How do we modernize shipbuilding to meet current and future challenges?
2. How can autonomy enhance safety, efficiency, and resilience in the maritime ecosystem?

The solutions require urgency and purpose.

We are at a pivotal moment, with UMS unlocking benefits in safety, technological leadership, economic activity, and workforce opportunities. Supporting the advanced maritime and autonomy industry must be a national priority to expand the economic and safety benefits for the commercial shipping industry, as well as extending the operational reach of our U.S. Navy and U.S. Coast Guard. We also must consider geopolitical and global economic considerations. Today, the United States has fewer than 80 oceangoing ships in international commerce and limited shipbuilding capacity, while People's Republic of China has both the largest commercial shipping and naval battle force, and commands over 50% of global shipbuilding and over 70% of new orders. This is a concerning metric for national security and economic competitiveness that demands urgent attention and significant, ongoing investment.

AUVSI and our members are prepared to help address this challenge. The UMS industry delivers cost-effective solutions for commercial shipping, environmental monitoring, offshore energy, fisheries, infrastructure assessments, defense, and beyond. These systems transform vessel design, propulsion, sensors, and navigation, unlocking innovative capabilities for coastal and open-ocean operations while enhancing productivity and safety. U.S. companies are investing in high-rate production facilities, generating thousands of manufacturing jobs across numerous congressional districts and states. However, while the U.S. shipbuilding industry supports initial UMS adoption, scaling these technologies demands revitalization. Key barriers – aging

infrastructure, outdated construction methods, and workforce shortages – must be addressed to fully realize the potential of UMS and strengthen U.S. maritime leadership.

The U.S. has an opportunity to lead in this space, recapitalizing our domestic fleet and becoming a global exporter of UMS technology, but to do so, sustained investment into domestic capacity is required. Additionally, the U.S. must make meaningful progress on regulations for digital navigation, commercial, and civil use of UMS.

To revitalize the maritime industry, Congress must:

1. **Pass the SHIPS for America Act.** AUVSI and our maritime members staunchly support the passing of this legislation to expand the U.S.-flag fleet, rebuild the industrial base, and provide incentives like tax credits. AUVSI encourages garnering as many bipartisan cosponsors possible to expeditiously move the SHIPS for America Act through the legislative process.
2. **Increase federal investment in UMS.** Fund research, development, and deployment of UMS to enhance maritime domain awareness, automation, and digitalization for both commercial and defense applications.
3. **Develop collaborative UMS traffic management.** Create safe, efficient traffic management systems for UMS in coastal and open-ocean settings, avoiding restrictive regulations that hinder innovation in uncrewed maritime technologies.
4. **Expand workforce training programs.** Invest in technology-driven training to address skilled labor shortages, equipping workers with expertise in UMS manufacturing, operation, and maintenance.
5. **Implement innovation-friendly regulations.** Adopt flexible, risk-based UMS regulations that ensure safety while fostering innovation and testing of novel uncrewed maritime systems. Avoid overregulation that stifles commercial growth, essential for U.S. global leadership and national security.
6. **Incentivize automation and digital tools.** Encourage industry adoption of cost-saving automation and digital technologies that uphold safety standards.
7. **Advance AI-driven navigation and data systems.** Support investment in AI-powered navigation, real-time data sharing, and crewed-uncrewed coordination to enhance operational efficiency.
8. **Strengthen workforce development.** Fund specialized UMS training, recruitment, and education programs to build a future-ready maritime workforce.

A revitalized industry is key to UMS potential, ensuring safety, efficiency, and economic vitality. AUVSI is ready to collaborate with Congress, U.S. federal agencies, and industry stakeholders to advance the SHIPS for America Act and build a resilient, future-ready maritime ecosystem.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration. We look forward to working with the Subcommittee for realizing the transformative benefits of UMS for all stakeholders.