

STATEMENT UPON INTRODUCTION OF "THE MARITIME EDUCATION AND TRAINING ACT OF 1979"

Mr. Speaker, I am honored today to join my colleague from New York, Congressman John M. Murphy, the distinguished Chairman of the Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries, in introducing the "Maritime Education and Training Act of 1979."

This landmark legislation deals comprehensively with the federal role in educating and training merchant marine officers. The United States needs a strong merchant marine, both in peacetime as one of the major seagoing nations of the world as well as in time of war to provide an essential naval auxiliary capability.

To have a strong merchant marine requires an adequate supply of well-trained deck and engineering officers. The goal of this legislation is to provide for this supply of officers in an orderly, timely, and responsible fashion.

As Chairman of the Ad Hoc Select Subcommittee on Maritime Education and Training, I have been working on drafting this bill since February in close cooperation with Congressman Murphy.

In the 95th Congress, the Subcommittee was chaired by Congressman Gerry Studds of Massachusetts. Under his astute leadership the Subcommittee conducted a far-reaching examination of maritime education and training in the United States, resulting in the Oversight Report on the Federal Government's Role in Merchant Marine Officer Education (Serial No. 95-E).

The legislation being introduced today implements the recommendations of the Oversight Report, and thereby accomplishes two very important objectives. The first is a complete recodification of statutes dealing with merchant officer education. Previously, these provisions have existed in a variety of laws. This legislation brings these provisions together consistently into a single act. The second objective is to incorporate into law the large number of remedial changes detailed in the Oversight Report.

The Subcommittee will conduct extensive hearings in the near future. The legislation being introduced today provides a framework and point of departure. It is an important step. As Chairman Murphy has pointed out, the hearings will lead to refinement of the bill.

Two issues in particular that the hearings will examine are the nominations and appointment procedures at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy and the sea-going obligations of graduates from both the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy and the six state maritime academies. There have been abuses in the past in these areas. The abuses will be corrected.

This legislation is the most complete and thorough attention ever accorded maritime education and training. This legislation is important and significant. I look forward to its speedy passage.