

## Alcohol at Sea: Committee Meeting 4

### Presenter Biographical Sketches

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#### ERIC R. DAWICKI

##### *Northeast Maritime Institute, President*

Eric R. Dawicki is an internationally respected maritime policy expert with a proven track record of leadership and success in maritime transportation, safety, security, and regulatory affairs. He has played a pivotal role in advancing global maritime strategy, education and training, and economic development.

Holding a Master of Public Administration with a concentration in Public Affairs from American University in Washington, D.C., President Dawicki has more than 35 years of experience in the maritime industry. His expertise bridges policy development with hands-on maritime operations. His career includes service in the United States Coast Guard Reserve and the United States Merchant Marine, shipboard roles in various capacities, LNG tanker operations management, and consultancy to private shipping companies, port facilities, and governments worldwide on compliance with domestic and international regulatory frameworks.

As President of Northeast Maritime Institute (NMI), Dawicki has transformed it into the first private maritime college in U.S. history, offering degree programs in Maritime Science, continuing education, and innovative digital learning platforms. Under his leadership, NMI has pioneered online learning simulators and global training and certification programs for mariners. NMI also supports domestic and international maritime policy through its Center for Ocean Policy and Economics (COPE), which was instrumental in drafting the framework for A Revitalization Plan for U.S. Maritime Trade, Commerce, and Strategic Competition. This plan laid the groundwork for the bipartisan SHIPS Act, introduced exactly three years after Dawicki's press conference and panel discussion at The National Press Club on December 19, 2021. Additionally, he spearheaded efforts to incorporate psychological safety, bullying, and sexual assault/harassment (SASH) into the STCW Code under Personal Safety and Social Responsibility, leading COPE working groups that achieved near-unanimous adoption by the IMO's Maritime Safety Committee.

Dawicki also serves as Co-Founder, President, and CEO of the Commonwealth of Dominica Maritime Registry, overseeing an international network of 28 regional offices and nearly 400 vessels operating across the Caribbean, Mediterranean, Asia, and the Black Sea. As Head of Delegation to the International Maritime Organization (IMO), he actively represents the Commonwealth of Dominica in global maritime policy discussions. His additional accomplishments include serving as a member of the U.S. National Maritime Security Advisory Committee under both the Bush and Obama administrations. He has also served as the Lead Delegate to the United Nations' International Maritime Organization (IMO), representing both the United States and the Commonwealth of Dominica. Furthermore, he was a Board Governor and Executive Governor of the UN's World Maritime University (WMU), where he chaired its 30-year sustainability plan, now successfully implemented. He is also the founder and inventor of HALO Educations Systems, which implemented the highest level software to every be used to combine machine learning and human auditing to detect cheating on exams, which was used since COVID for USCG exams.

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#### CHRISTINE DUNN

##### *Sanford Heisler Sharp McKnight, Co-Managing Partner of the Washington, DC Office and Sexual Violence, Title IX, and Victims' Rights Practice Group Co-Chair*

Christine Dunn is Co-Managing Partner at Sanford Heisler Sharp McKnight's Washington, DC office and Co-Chair of the firm's Sexual Violence, Title IX and Victims' Rights Practice Group. Sanford Heisler Sharp McKnight is a nationally ranked civil rights, human rights, and social justice law firm.

Since joining Sanford Heisler Sharp McKnight, Christine has been recognized in the legal community as a Lawyer of Distinction and as one of Lawdragon's 500 Leading Plaintiff Employment and Civil Rights Lawyers. In 2024, Christine was one of only 15 attorneys selected to The National Law Journal's Elite Women of the Plaintiffs Bar; in 2023, she was named Sexual Violence Litigation Lawyer of the Year for Lawyer Monthly's Women in Law Awards.

Profiles in Diversity Journal has named Christine among its Women Worth Watching in Leadership (2022) and a Latino Leader (2023). The National Law Journal named Christine a 2023 Plaintiffs Attorney Trailblazer.

Christine's work to hold the U.S. military civilly liable for incidents of sexual assault and abuse has generated widespread coverage in mainstream media, including People magazine, The New York Times, and The Washington Post. Christine is currently representing dozens of former patients of a U.S. Army doctor who was sentenced in 2025 to more than 13 years in prison for sexually abusing servicemembers in his care. Christine is also representing more than two dozen survivors of sexual assault at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut.

At Sanford Heisler Sharp McKnight, Christine's practice has also focused on sexual violence, Title IX, and victims' rights, whistleblower/qui tam matters, and employment discrimination actions, representing individuals and classes. Christine's representations have included:

- Litigating and resolving lawsuits against a major shipping company on behalf of two female United States Merchant Marine Academy cadets who were sexually assaulted and sexually harassed while working aboard a commercial ship as part of their "Sea Year" requirement.
- Reaching a settlement with boarding school Phillips Exeter Academy on behalf of a former student who was groomed and sexually abused by a longtime math teacher at the school, while also serving as the victim's advocate during the criminal proceedings against the teacher.
- Litigating on behalf of a certified class of approximately ten thousand African American current, former, and prospective Deputy U.S. Marshals who experienced race discrimination.
- Negotiating settlement of more than a million dollars on behalf of a female general counsel of a financial services company who was discriminated against on the basis of her gender.
- Negotiating settlement on behalf of a young woman who was sexually assaulted in a residential treatment facility.
- Negotiating settlement on behalf of a male client who was sexually assaulted as a child by a teacher at an elite private school.
- Litigating on behalf of a female medical student who was sexually assaulted in her apartment building as a result of her landlord's negligence in failing to repair a known security risk.
- Negotiating robust programmatic relief from an elite high school on behalf of a sexual assault survivor.
- Assisting a former employee of a construction and engineering company to obtain a recovery for blowing the whistle on fraud and allowing the government to achieve a \$5.65 million settlement under the False Claims Act.

A member of the Maryland and District of Columbia bars, Christine received her law degree from the University of Virginia School of Law and her Bachelor of Arts from Yale University. Christine has conducted presentations on a range of issues related to victim advocacy. She is a board member of the National Crime Victim Law Institute and a member of the National Crime Victims' Bar Association. Before joining Sanford Heisler Sharp McKnight, Christine completed a clerkship for the Honorable Michael Farrell of the District of Columbia Court of Appeals. After her clerkship, Christine joined Williams and Connolly LLP as an Associate where she litigated matters involving class action, sexual abuse, accounting fraud, defamation, medical malpractice, contract dispute, and white-collar criminal defense. Christine then worked at the U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division. At the Department of Justice, Christine prosecuted federal civil rights crimes involving official and police misconduct, racially motivated violence, and human trafficking, including sex trafficking. She also conducted extensive grand jury investigations and jury trials throughout the U.S. and made numerous presentations to law enforcement agencies on civil rights issues. Many of Christine's official and police misconduct prosecutions involved allegations of sexual violence. Christine also completed a detail as a Special Assistant U.S. Attorney in the Eastern District of Virginia where she appeared in court on a daily basis to handle a variety of criminal matters.

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## **REAR ADMIRAL JOHN A. OKON, USN (RET.)**

### *SUNY Maritime College, President*

Rear Admiral John A. Okon, USN (ret), is President of Maritime College. He was appointed by the SUNY Board of Trustees in June 2024 and assumed the leadership post in July 2024, becoming the 12th President of the College.

A native of Syracuse, NY, he is a retired Naval Officer with over 33 years of service. In the Navy, Rear Admiral Okon served as a Surface Warfare Officer, Meteorology and Oceanography Officer, and Information Warfare Officer. He commanded Naval Antisubmarine Warfare Center, Yokosuka, Japan; Fleet Numerical Meteorology and Oceanography Center, Monterey, CA; and Naval Meteorology and Oceanography Command, Bay St. Louis, MS. He was also the Navigator of the Navy, Hydrographer of the Navy, and Oceanographer of the Navy.

Rear Admiral Okon graduated from Maritime College in 1991 with a Bachelor of Science in Meteorology and Oceanography, Naval Postgraduate School in 2003 with a Master of Science in Meteorology and Physical Oceanography, and Naval War College in 2007 with a Master of Arts in National Security Studies.

He is married to the former Valerie Gessner of Catskill, NY, Maritime College class of 1992.

#### **K. DENISE RUCKER KREPP**

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##### *Coast Guard veteran and former Chief Counsel U.S. Maritime Administration (MARAD)*

Krepp started her career as a Coast Guard officer. She subsequently served as a Transportation Security Administration attorney, Hill staffer, Maritime Administration Chief Counsel, lobbyist, adjunct professor, Girl Scout troop leader, and locally elected official. She was a member of the Surface Transportation Security Advisory Committee and is currently a National Maritime Historical Society trustee.

A prolific writer, Krepp's articles have been published in CNN, Washington Post, Military Times, Maritime Executive, Roll Call, Proceedings, and Tradewinds. Krepp testified twice in 2014 before Congressionally mandated panels on sexual assault in the military, and the US Commission on Civil Rights in 2019.

Krepp is a graduate of The George Washington University and the University of Miami School of Law. She and her husband live in Washington DC.