

**Statement of
The Honorable James L. Oberstar
Subcommittee on the Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation
Hearing on
“Overview of Coast Guard Acquisition Policies and Programs”
March 24, 2009**

Mr. Chairman, thank you for scheduling today's hearing to get an overview of Coast Guard acquisitions. Although the Coast Guard is starting to move away from the "Deepwater" concept and assess new assets individually, there is still work to be done. The Coast Guard needs implement acquisition wide reform, not just Deepwater.

In addition to the Deepwater acquisitions price exponentially increasing, there continues to be problems with Rescue 21, when in the beginning, the price tag was \$250 million dollars and now it's roughly one billion dollars. Although the Deepwater contract was plagued with issues, I would like to commend the Commandant, Admiral Thad Allen and Rear Admiral Blore for the great strides they have made in managing the Coast Guard's acquisition programs and the creation of the new Acquisitions Directorate.

With that said, the Coast Guard needs to ensure it has properly trained, qualified and certified individuals to handle its major acquisitions before they are assigned to those positions. There should also be standards and benchmarks with the major assets it acquires.

The Coast Guard is accustomed to doing more with less and we are at a point now and have been at this point for some time, where this is a problem. The Coast Guard has a rapidly aging fleet of ships and aircraft that have long extended their service life. There is also a great need for replacement or refurbishing of their shore infrastructure. Although there is a greater need of funding than what is actually distributed to the Coast Guard annually, we need to be assured that the tax payer's money we do give the service is spent prudently and responsibly.

I commend the hard working men and women of the Coast Guard for serving on these aging assets and working hard to maintain them until the new assets are acquired. I want to thank Rear Admiral Blore and Mr. Hutton for being here today look forward to your testimony.

Chairman Cummings, I am privileged to work with you and Ranking Members Mica and LoBiondo during this hearing and look forward to our continued bipartisan relationship during the 111th Congress to ensure we have the world's best Coast Guard.