

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF**

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**BEFORE THE UNITED STATE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND  
INFRASTRUCTURE****SUBCOMMITTEE ON COAST GUARD AND MARITIME TRANSPORTATION****MAINTAINING COAST GUARD READINESS**

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Chairman Hunter, Ranking Member Garamendi, and Members of the Committee — thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today on such an important topic. I am grateful for your kind introduction, and for your leadership in bringing this topic to the nation's attention.

It is an honor and a privilege to be here to today talk about the Coast Guard, our fifth armed service.

The Navy League is one of a few advocates that act on behalf of the Coast Guard. The Navy League was founded in 1902 with the encouragement of President Theodore Roosevelt, and since then has provided a powerful, nonpartisan voice for stronger sea services to Congress and to the American people. The Navy League has grown into the foremost citizens' organization to serve, support, and stand with all the sea services – the U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Coast Guard and U.S.-flag Merchant Marine. The Navy League comprises 43,000 civilians in more than 245 councils around the world, working to support sea service members and their families. The Navy League has three missions: to enhance the morale of active-duty personnel and their families; to inform Congress and the American public on the importance of strong sea services; and to support youth through programs that expose young people to the values of our sea services. We are grateful for the opportunity to fulfill our mission of advocacy before this committee.

The U.S. Coast Guard is a truly unique service, with military and civil responsibilities, and humanitarian missions that have accrued by Acts of Congress since its founding in 1790. This extraordinarily broad mission portfolio continues to serve the United States well—though we as a nation have not treated the Coast Guard as well as we should. Since 9/11, the Coast Guard has seen its area of responsibility grow to 11 statutory missions, but its budget growth has decelerated, failing to match mission demand or meet inflation adjustments.

We must fund the Coast Guard properly, with an operating budget of no less than \$6.8 billion and an acquisition budget of \$2.5 billion, so that the service can continue to provide protection on the seas, from threats delivered by sea, and of the sea itself.

The Coast Guard provides a complementary and non-redundant portfolio of operations that furthers the nation's maritime presence worldwide. 2013 was another year of many operational successes, with over 7,400 lives saved, more than \$3 billion worth of illicit drugs seized before they could hit America's streets and over 8,400 security boardings of vessels in and around the United States. Concluding his final year as Commandant, Admiral Robert Papp, Jr.—the 24<sup>th</sup> Commandant of the Coast Guard—passes on to Admiral Paul Zukunft three main challenges: investing resources for greater long-term operational capability, preserving critical front-line operations, and strengthening resource and operational stewardship through risk-based allocation of resources. Thus the Coast Guard's priorities mirror those challenges.

Completing the eight National Security Cutters (NSCs) in the approved program of record is the Coast Guard's most critical acquisition goal, and we thank Congress for its support for this program. As the replacement vessel for the current fleet of 12 378-foot High Endurance Cutters (WHECs), the NSC will provide a highly capable vessel and a robust command and control platform even in harsh operating environments, such as the Pacific Ocean, the Bering Sea and the Arctic. Admiral Papp has effectively espoused the need to keep four of these vessels underway at a time in key operational arenas, including Alaska and the Bering Sea, the Western Pacific, and in counterdrug operations off Latin and Central America and in the Caribbean.

However, at the rate that new cutters are coming online and older ships are being decommissioned, there will be an unavoidable capability gap that will pose significant risk to

America's security. Some of that gap in coastal areas will be met by the 154-foot Sentinel-Class Fast Response Cutter (FRC) that is currently being constructed as a replacement for the Coast Guard's worn-out fleet of 110-foot patrol boats. Several of the expected 58 new FRCs have been commissioned and are in service today, mostly to support high-paced counter-drug and alien-migration operations in south Florida and the Caribbean. The President's request for production funding to construct two more FRCs in FY15 is the minimum necessary to improve the Coast Guard's waning operational capability.

Highly important for future Coast Guard operations is to begin construction of the Offshore Patrol Cutter (OPC), which will replace 14 210-foot and 13 270-foot medium-endurance cutters built in the 1960s and 1980s, respectively. While the OPC is less capable than the NSC, it will serve as an operational workhorse to carry out the Coast Guard's primary missions. Given the requirement to decommission more vessels in 2015 than bring new vessels into the fleet, the Coast Guard must move ahead smartly with reviewing the preliminary design work for the OPC and, very soon, begin construction. Given the magnitude of the pending capability gap and significant economies of scale to be realized, the Navy League believes Congress should fund the construction of at least two OPCs annually.

Aviation assets also are key to the Coast Guard's future. One of the most pressing aviation projects is the continued acquisition of the HC-130J Long-Range Surveillance Aircraft, as the anticipated final HC-144A Maritime Patrol Craft receives operations and maintenance funding in FY15. With the consolidation of the HC-130H and HC-130J projects into a single Long-Range Surveillance program of record, some basic policy decisions have been defined for that fleet. But in a new development, the Coast Guard recently received authority to accept 14 C-27J aircraft from the Air Force. The Coast Guard needs Acquisition, Construction and Improvement funding of at least \$15M in FY15 to continue the C-27J Acquisition Program Office (APO) stand up, including APO flight hours, technical support, and training to bring these aircraft to operational capability with minimal disruption and risk so as to meet maritime surveillance needs.

Finally, in looking at the future scope of the Coast Guard's areas of responsibility, one geographic area of operations that stands out is the Arctic. Its abundant natural resources, combined with an unforgiving environment, have made Alaska a focal point of the Coast Guard's fisheries management and search-and-rescue activities. However, in recent years as ice over the Arctic cap has diminished and discovery of rich new sources of energy are believed to be more likely, the Arctic's importance will only increase. The Coast Guard recently published its Arctic Strategy document to guide its Arctic operations into the future. Three strategic objectives flow from this document: Improving Awareness, Modernizing Governance and Broadening Partnerships. To operationalize this strategy, the Coast Guard must ensure continued capability in Arctic icebreaking. Currently operating sufficiently with one operational Polar Code 1 (heavy) icebreaker and one Polar Code 3 (medium) icebreaker, the Coast Guard must initiate a heavy icebreaker acquisition program now if a new capability is to be brought online in this decade. Most importantly, this necessary acquisition must be seen as a national priority and it must be funded in addition to the Coast Guard's already meager acquisition budget. A new Polar Icebreaker likely will cost in excess of \$1 billion. However, enabling the United States to have the capability of operating in such an expansive and harsh environment will be a necessary investment the nation must make.

Keeping up with the demands of a fast-paced operational environment with reduced numbers of assets will be difficult and will place greater demands on already hard-working Coast Guard men and women. In a competitive human resource environment, the Coast Guard must maintain parity with the other services in matters such as pay, allowances, training, and health-care as well as civilian pay raises and retirement contributions. No matter what develops in Washington's budget negotiations this year, the Navy League believes that it is critical for the Coast Guard to maintain a minimum of 42,000 active duty military and 8,100 civilian personnel to support current missions.

Recently commissioned assets also will require operational and maintenance funding of at least \$72 million. New assets -- including shore facilities, the FRCs, the Response Boat Medium, Rescue 21 command centers and the HC-144 Maritime Patrol Aircraft -- all must be

operated and maintained to accomplish the Coast Guard's broad mission set. These new assets will require additional personnel to operate them in FY15.

As fast-paced operations continue, the Coast Guard must be effective not only through near-flawless mission execution, it also must efficiently manage its existing assets and act as a good steward of taxpayers' investments. While some new assets will be coming online in FY15, at the same time the Coast Guard will decommission many aging assets and reduce the personnel associated in operating them. The assets to be decommissioned in FY15 include two 378-foot High-Endurance Cutters, eight 110-foot coastal patrol boats and three HC-130 aircraft. The Navy League understands the necessity of being good stewards of the taxpayer's dollar, but remains concerned about the increasing capability gap caused by the rapid decommissioning of operational assets before equally capable replacement assets are available.

As with all mobile forces, presence is key. The only limiting factor to how much our Coast Guard can accomplish is how many ships and aircraft they have, and how much training they receive. We have had the chance to notice the direct correlation during sequestration. The Coast Guard, after having \$200 million cut by sequestration, saw a 30% reduction in drug interdiction. If the Coast Guard remains underfunded, our national leaders will have to decide what missions they want unfulfilled. The Coast Guard cannot do more with less into perpetuity.

In summary, the Navy League of the United States recommends an operating budget of no less than \$6.8 billion, authorized personnel of no less than 42,000 active-duty Coast Guard men and women, and restoration of a Reserve force strength to FY14-enacted levels. The \$10.5 million reduction to the Reserve Training appropriation in FY15 degrades sustained Reserve response to disasters and national emergencies. We recommend a steady acquisition budget of \$2.5 billion annually; support the NSC program; continued funding sufficient to procure at least two FRCs in FY15 and every year thereafter until completion of the program of record; construction of the OPC beginning between FY17 and FY18, with funding sufficient to construct at least two OPCs annually; funding to support spare parts necessary to maintain operational availability of the HC-144A Maritime Patrol Aircraft and the HC-130J Long-Range Surveillance Aircraft; funding for C-27J spare parts in addition to funding for a C-27J simulator

and to stand up the C-27J Acquisition Program Office; continued funding for modernization of MH-65 Short Range Recovery helicopters; and pre-acquisition activities for one new Polar Icebreaker with future funding for continued construction.

In my role as National President of the Navy League, I have been privileged to visit a 110-foot patrol boat commanded by a lieutenant, a Coast Guard station headed by senior enlisted, and many other Coast Guard platforms and stations. The American people should know that based on those many meetings, I have the upmost confidence in the ability of Coast Guard personnel to carry out their mission. Their dedication, sense of service, and devotion to this country inspire and awe me. They can carry out their missions; it is our job to ensure they have the right tools to do so.

We ask the Coast Guard to do much, but we give it very little. In the FY14 budget request, the acquisition budget did not even break \$1 billion, and FY15's request is only slightly over \$1 billion — not nearly enough for the Coast Guard to effectively complete its missions. We second the words of last year's House appropriations draft bill for the Coast Guard, which stated: "The fiscal year 2014 proposal is even more egregious, and gives the impression that this Administration does not appropriately value the work of the Coast Guard. It includes the lowest level of drug interdiction effectiveness in the past five years and reduces recapitalization funding to unsustainable levels. Over the past decade when our Nation has called for help, the Coast Guard has responded: they responded on the morning of 9/11 by helping untold numbers of people evacuate the devastation of lower Manhattan; they responded during the aftermath of Katrina by saving survivors stranded on rooftops; they responded by being the first to arrive in Haiti after an earthquake hit the country and killed thousands; and more recently, they responded to the worst oil spill in the history of our Nation. If the country intends for the Coast Guard of tomorrow to be as effective as the Coast Guard we have today, and have depended on for decades, these reductions must be resoundingly rejected."

The Navy League would like to thank this Committee for its leadership, and thank Congress for being supportive of the Coast Guard in ensuring they have the resources they need. We must be as good of shipmates to them as they have been to every American.