

February 11, 2025

Commerce Committee Leaders Introduce Bipartisan, Bicameral Coast Guard Reauthorization Act

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senate Commerce Committee Chairman Ted Cruz (R-Texas), Ranking Member Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.), and Sens. Dan Sullivan (R-Alaska) and Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis.) introduced the Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2025. The bipartisan legislation, which was agreed to between leaders of both the Commerce Committee and House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee, authorizes funding to bolster the Coast Guard’s critical missions of border security, facilitating maritime commerce, and enforcing the rule of law in domestic and international waters.

Upon introduction, Sen. Cruz said:

“Every day, the U.S. Coast Guard acts to stop the flow of illegal aliens and illicit drugs like fentanyl pouring across our borders. Our bipartisan, bicameral bill would make it easier for Coast Guardsmen to accomplish their mission of protecting America at sea. In particular, the bill strengthens marine resources in Texas, increases cooperation between the Coast Guard and U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and supports Coast Guard responsibilities related to U.S. energy and commercial space activities.”

Sen. Cantwell said:

“This legislation prioritizes the Coast Guard’s most important asset—the men and women of the Coast Guard, and their families,. The bill drives much needed reforms that will help prevent sexual assault and sexual harassment throughout the Coast Guard, including establishing confidential reporting, strengthening protective orders, expanding access to care for victims and stronger accountability for leadership. Admiral Fagan made great progress during her term, and the next Commandant will need to continue to be a steady force that stands up for service members. The bill establishes a new Vice Admiral dedicated to improving recruitment, health care and child care for members. The bill also increases funding for core Coast Guard missions such as shipbuilding and cracking down on illegal fishing and drug smuggling.”

Sen. Sullivan said:

“Alaska has more coastline than the rest of the Lower 48 combined and the Coast Guard is essential to our communities, our economy, and our national security. Our bipartisan bill ensures that the men and women of the Coast Guard have the resources, equipment, and support needed to carry out their critical missions. This bill includes several important provisions that reflect Alaska’s unique needs and the vital role the Coast Guard plays in my state, including authorizing programs that support Coast Guard members, and helping develop infrastructure to support our Coast Guard members and

Alaska communities. I am looking forward to working alongside my colleagues to advance this bill and support the Coast Guard's mission now and into the future."

Sen. Baldwin said:

"Our Coast Guard plays a critical role in keeping Americans safe and moving Wisconsin's maritime economy forward. From strengthening icebreaking capabilities on the Great Lakes to combating the flow of fentanyl into our nation, our bipartisan legislation will help protect thousands of American jobs and lives. Most importantly, our bill invests in our Coasties by expanding access to affordable housing and quality health care, while also taking crucial steps to help prevent sexual assault and harassment within the Coast Guard."

BACKGROUND

The Coast Guard Reauthorization Act of 2025 makes several enhancements to the Coast Guard's operations by:

- **Expanding efforts to interdict and prosecute illicit drug trafficking.** The Maritime Drug Law Enforcement Act will now ensure that the United States can prosecute drug traffickers who utilize remote-controlled or autonomous vessels to smuggle illegal narcotics.
- **Protecting personnel from illicit drug exposure.** All Coast Guard installations will be required to maintain a supply of medication to treat opioid overdoses, including fentanyl.
- **Upgrading icebreaker fleet.** The bill directs the Coast Guard to establish a replacement plan for aging icebreaking tug fleets and expedite the delivery of new icebreakers.
- **Addressing grossly negligent operations of vessels.** With the steady rise of vessel traffic on U.S. waterways, individuals who operate a vessel in a grossly negligent manner and cause serious bodily injury will be held accountable with appropriate criminal penalties.
- **Mapping Arctic maritime routes.** The Arctic Circle has strategic economic and military significance for the United States. This provision would promote American interests in the region and improve emergency response capabilities and infrastructure needed to support vessel traffic.
- **Increasing the Coast Guard's deterrence capabilities.** With increased instances of illegal fishing operations and illicit drug trafficking in the South China Sea, it is critical that the United States Coast Guard and Taiwan Coast Guard Administration conduct joint and integrated maritime operational and leadership training to combat violations of maritime law and threats to our national security.
- **Improving the livelihoods of Coast Guard families.** The Coast Guard will grant a cash allowance to pregnant officers to purchase maternity-related uniform items, allow the Coast Guard to acquire more housing, and identify Coast Guard duty locations in which there is a misalignment between the basic allowance for housing and prevailing housing costs.
- **Refining procedures to prevent and respond to sexual assaults.** The Coast Guard will establish confidential reporting for sexual harassment, strengthen protective orders for victims, and provide access to the Department of Defense's Defense Sexual Assault

Incident Database. The bill also overhauls the transfer process for victims and allows victims of sex-related offenses to request temporary separation.

- **Requiring the Coast Guard Academy to study its safety infrastructure.** The Coast Guard Academy will be required to modify policy related to sexual assault matters, install electronic locking mechanisms to secure cadet rooms and common spaces, and update the Academy's Board of Visitors to ensure better Congressional oversight and engagement.
- **Adding units to the Coast Guard's Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) program.** The bill will increase the number of units from 14 to 20 to better recruit and retain a robust and well-qualified Coast Guard officer corps.

With about 2,000 Coast Guard personnel stationed in Texas, the Service's men and women have contributed significantly to Texas's border security and economy. The Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2025 will specifically help Texans by:

- **Allowing the Coast Guard to use a proven, performance-driven approach for inspecting foreign flag tank vessels.** An overwhelming majority of the Coast Guard's gas carrier compliance exams are conducted in Texas. Performance-driven examinations will allow the Coast Guard to work more efficiently and advance President Trump's direction to 'Unleash American Energy.'
- **Establishing safety zones for space activities and offshore energy development activities.** Texas is home to a robust commercial space and energy industry, and this authority allows the Coast Guard to establish safety zones in support of space launches and recovery, as well as offshore energy development activities, ensuring more job growth and greater energy security.
- **Streamlining the process of data sharing between the Coast Guard and U.S. Customs and Border Protection.** Tactical maritime surveillance systems (TMSS) at the Coast Guard Station on South Padre Island will be used for the purposes of data integration and information sharing with U.S. Customs and Border Protection to aid in the detection and interdiction of illegal aliens and fish poachers.
- **Upgrading Coast Guard facilities to support border security operations and future aviation missions.** The bill specifically requires studies on improving Texas-based Coast Guard Stations on South Padre Island, Port Aransas, and Port O'Connor, as well as the Coast Guard Air Station in Corpus Christi.

Read the text of the bill [HERE](#).

###