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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE,
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May 11, 2020

JOHN KEAST, STAFF DIRECTOR
DAVID STRICKLAND, DEMOCRATIC STAFF DIRECTOR

U.S. Coast Guard Academy
Class of 2020
31 Mohegan Ave
New London, CT 06320

Dear Class of 2020,

On June 27, 2016, when you reported in as Swabs, you embarked on a journey to become leaders of strength and character, poised to meet emerging national priorities in the homeland and across the globe. Since that day, you have worked harder than you could have anticipated. In the course of nearly 200 weeks, through intense training and rigorous learning, you have been transformed into military men and women ready to accept the challenges that await you as Coast Guard officers. You will soon join an elite group of Americans who can be proud to have graduated from our Nation's most selective military service academy. Congratulations on such a momentous achievement.

Since its founding in 1876, the U.S. Coast Guard Academy has given itself to molding the future leaders of America's premier multi-mission, maritime military force. The Academy's graduates have distinguished themselves on the high seas, along the coasts, and in the air. Forty years ago, the first women to graduate from any U.S. military academy received their degrees and commissions at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy on May 21, 1980. This year will mark the commissioning of the largest graduating class in the Academy's history. The Class of 2020 is also one of the most diverse in the Academy's history, representing cities all across America as well as some of our international partners. And of the 258 graduating cadets, 102 of you are women – another Academy record.

No doubt, a virtual graduation ceremony is not quite the way you imagined finishing your time at the Academy. Each of you had looked forward to tossing your cadet hats high in the air, exchanging them for your new rank in this hallowed tradition. But saving lives and providing leadership in times of crisis are also traditions of Coast Guard service, and this is one of those times. The call to action has never been stronger. America's continued national and economic security relies upon open trade and a strong, rules-based order. A marine transportation system that facilitates trillions of dollars in annual economic activity depends upon continued Coast Guard leadership. It is time for the Class of 2020 to take the watch.

Admiral Shultz recently told you, "Don't underestimate your ability to influence positive change. There are many big problems that can be solved by junior officers with passion, dedication, and hard work." I could not agree more. At a time when complex problems require interdisciplinary solutions, the Class of 2020 will answer the call.

Soon you will swear the oath of office and receive your commission as Ensigns. As commissioned officers, you are called not just to lead but also to serve those under your charge. My hope is that each of you will practice servant leadership. The depth of care, concern, and attention to detail that you, as officers, demonstrate to the remarkable men and women you serve alongside will define your success as leaders. As a retired officer, I can tell you this will be one of the greatest honors of your lives.

You represent the best of America and carry in your hearts the values that are the source of our liberty and our spiritual strength. This is reflected in the path of service that you have chosen. We are a nation of free men and women who use our God-given liberty to serve our country because we love her and all that she represents.

The motto of the U.S. Coast Guard Academy is *Scientiæ Cedit Mare – the sea yields to knowledge*. As you move forward in the next stage of your lives, I hope you continue your quest for knowledge and strive to embody your service's ethos, *Semper Paratus – Always Ready*. I congratulate you on all of your hard work. Thank you for your service, now and into the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Roger F. Wicker". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Roger" and last name "Wicker" clearly legible.

Roger F. Wicker
Chairman

CC:
The Honorable Chad F. Wolf
Acting Secretary
Department of Homeland Security

Admiral Karl L. Schultz
Commandant
U.S. Coast Guard

Rear Admiral William G. Kelly
Superintendent
U.S. Coast Guard Academy