

QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED BY

Senator Thune

Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation

April 8, 2014

“Coast Guard Commandant Nomination” Hearing

Witness/Prospective Commandant: VADM Zukunft, Commander, Coast Guard Pacific Area

Vessel Incidental Discharge Act (VIDA)

Background: Our Committee may soon consider the Vessel Incidental Discharge Act (VIDA), which establishes an enforceable, uniform national standard for discharges incidental to the normal operations of a vessel. This legislation, which has bipartisan support and 26 co-sponsors in the Senate, charges the Coast Guard, in consultation with EPA, to establish and enforce these standards for vessel discharges based on best available and economically achievable technology.

Question: As Commandant, how would you support the Coast Guard’s role as primary regulatory and enforcement agency for this program?

Answer: If Congress were to enact the Vessel Incidental Discharge Act (a.k.a. S. 2094), the Coast Guard would expect to incorporate the bill’s regulatory and enforcement requirements into the Service’s existing inspection regime and port state control program. The transition that S. 2094 envisions—from several, sometimes overlapping, statutory regimes that regulate discharges incidental to the normal operations of a vessel to a single statutory regime—would not be without significant challenges for all concerned. Regardless, I can assure the Committee that, were Congress to enact S. 2094, I would make the transition one of my highest priorities. I stand ready to work with the Congress to ensure that the bill facilitates an effective transition, as well as with the Environmental Protection Agency to ensure that each of our agencies brings its unique capacities to bear so that the implementation is efficiently realized.

Coast Guard Personnel

Background: The current Commandant, Admiral Papp, recently testified before the House Transportation and Infrastructure committee on the Coast Guard’s Fiscal Year 2015 budget, which includes personnel cuts in addition to cuts from the last few years. .

Question: As Commandant, how will you address challenges in sustaining operations with reduced personnel?

Answer: The Coast Guard will leverage the inherent strengths of our strategies, concept of operations, and command and control structure to provide the American people the best service possible with available resources. This includes leveraging our strategy of prevention and response that aims to mitigate risks and respond to threats as early as possible. The Coast Guard will also leverage our adaptive concept of operations that employs a risk-based, layered approach in the off-shore, coastal and inland waterway environments, as well as close coordination with military, federal, state, local, territorial and tribal partners.