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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE,
AND TRANSPORTATION

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6125

WEBSITE: <https://commerce.senate.gov>

March 2, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

As Ranking Member of the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, I write to express my strong support for the U.S. Coast Guard in the Fiscal Year 2022 Federal budget. The Coast Guard has unique authorities and capabilities that advance our National Defense Strategy, including through protecting U.S. ports and patrolling the high seas. The Coast Guard plays a critical role in securing our nation and deserves the full resources needed to carry out its missions.

Over the past decade, the U.S. Coast Guard has taken on a greater number of missions to detect, deter, and disrupt terrorist threats and other criminal activity. The Coast Guard's increased activity has provided additional maritime law enforcement, disaster response efforts, and security operations in the U.S. domain. For example, through its leadership of the Interagency Working Group on Illegal, Unregulated, and Unreported Fishing and Seafood Fraud established by the Maritime SAFE Act, the Coast Guard has enforced international fishing treaties and brought our domestic and international partners to the table. Additionally, in January 2019, amid the longest government shutdown in American history, the crew of the U.S. Coast Guard National Security Cutter *Bertholf* deployed to the Taiwan Strait to promote free and open access to the seas and adherence to the rules-based order.

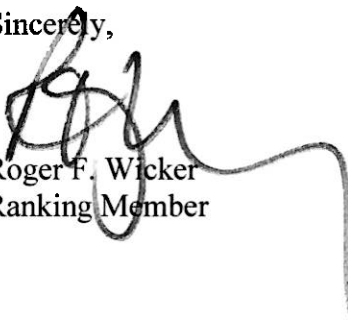
The U.S. Coast Guard has risen to the occasion on multiple fronts despite having an aging fleet and inadequate resources. The oldest ship in the Coast Guard was commissioned in 1944, and many others were built in the 1960s. This service has a reputation of doing more with less, but it could achieve a great deal more if it had the resources it needs. Congress and past Administrations have recognized this and provided funding to help the Coast Guard begin to modernize its fleet—and the investments are beginning to pay off. The increased number of national security cutters have helped combat drug smuggling and interrupt transnational criminal networks. The highly capable fast response cutters have enhanced the Coast Guard's disaster response efforts and improved port security.

Despite these needed improvements, the Coast Guard overall remains underfunded. Since fiscal year 2010, the Coast Guard's operations and maintenance funds have failed to keep

up with inflation, resulting in a significant loss of purchasing power. The cumulative impact over this period has been \$2.5 billion in lost operations and maintenance readiness. Every Coast Guard mission begins and ends at a shore facility. The Coast Guard owns or leases more than 20,000 such facilities, nearly half of which are beyond their useful service life. These piers, boat stations, sectors, and air stations, which are spread across more than 2,700 locations, represent a strategic opportunity to enhance the Coast Guard's operational effectiveness. We can and should do better for our Coast Guard men and women.

I ask that the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's budget request for fiscal year 2022 continue to support the U.S. Coast Guard's recapitalization efforts, account for increased operations costs, and, for the first time, adequately address shore side infrastructure needs. I appreciate your consideration of this request, and I look forward to working with you to support the men and women of our U.S. Coast Guard.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'RWicker', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Roger F. Wicker
Ranking Member