



## THE AMERICAN LEGION LEGISLATIVE POINT PAPERS

### **Pay the Coast Guard**

#### **Background**

Defending our nation comes with the obligation for the U.S. Government to adequately fund the Department of Defense (DoD), especially during government shutdowns. While the U.S. Coast Guard is no longer a part of DoD, its role involving National Security domestically, on our nation's borders and around the world is equally vital to the work our military performs globally. Our Coast Guard provides law enforcement, port security, maritime and coastal safety while too often operating outdated equipment and vessels.

The Coast Guard employs approximately 48,282 active duty and reserve and is organized under the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Previous government shutdowns caused members of the Coast Guard to temporarily lose pay and benefits, resulting in unnecessary stress, financial problems, significant degradation in readiness, and an increased threat to our nation's coastal security. Despite not being paid, they continue to work because their jobs are a matter of national security. During the 2019 government shutdown, The American Legion stepped up and issued more than \$1 million in expedited Temporary Financial Assistance grants to Coast Guard personnel and their families to help alleviate the situation.

The American Legion believes that the Coast Guard's mission is as essential to our national security and should never go without pay during any government shutdown and is in critical need of significant modernization to keep pace with today's emerging threats to the nation.

#### **Key Points**

- The U.S. Coast Guard is the only branch of the uniformed services of the Armed Forces that does not fall under the DoD. During federal government shutdowns, Coast Guard personnel are more exposed to working without pay. Because the Coast Guard is uniquely responsible for maritime security, search and rescue, port security, law enforcement, and military readiness with jurisdiction in domestic and international waters, American presidents have transferred Coast Guard assets to the Department of the Navy during almost every conflict, therefore should be treated and funded accordingly.
- The Coast Guard is in the midst of the largest recapitalization effort in its history – an effort critical to rebuilding the service branch. However, until recapitalization is fully completed, servicemembers must continue to conduct missions with legacy assets, some of which are over 50 years old.



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### What Can Congress Do?

- Approve and continue to increase the Coast Guard's budget annually to meet national security requirements and funding priorities such as restoring readiness and recapitalizing legacy assets and infrastructure.
- Pass legislation that would provide pay and allowances for members of the Coast Guard during a funding gap, provide full funding to address the shoreside facility maintenance and recapitalization backlog of the Coast Guard and diversify the Coast Guard (S.1845, the Unwavering Support for our Coast Guard Act).

#### Relevant Resolutions:

- American Legion Resolution No. 23 (2016): *Support for the Department of Homeland Security and Coast Guard.*<sup>23</sup>

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