

**Rep. John Garamendi
Opening Statement
House Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime
Transportation Hearing**

**“President’s Fiscal Year 2016 Budget Request for Coast Guard
and Maritime Transportation Programs”**

February 25, 2014

Mr. Chairman, I am anxious to hear from our very distinguished panel of witnesses so I will be brief.

First, I want to congratulate you on returning as the Chairman of the Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Subcommittee. We developed a very cooperative and cordial working relationship last Congress, and I look forward to working with you again this Congress to advance practical, bipartisan maritime policies that will broadly support the United States Coast Guard, the U.S. flag and the U.S. Merchant Marine.

Maritime policy matters and it is in our national economic interest that we should act. As the world's largest trading nation, the United States exports and imports annually in value about one-fourth of global merchandise trade. Approximately 95 percent of America’s foreign trade – approximately 1.3 billion tons – moves by ship.

Based on current projections, by the year 2020 U.S. foreign trade in goods may grow to four times today's value and almost double its current tonnage. Additionally, our inland waterways traffic will increase by one-third providing new economic opportunities in the U.S. hinterland.

The economic potential is there for all to see. But so are the challenges, such as solving port congestion, finding new cargo to grow the U.S. flag in the U.S. foreign trade, and developing new incentives to expand and diversify the U.S. shipbuilding industry.

That is why we should not be shooting ourselves in the foot at a time when we should be ramping up investments in our maritime agencies and the U.S. maritime economy. But that is exactly what we are on the cusp of doing.

If the House fails to pass before February 27 either a clean Fiscal Year 2015 appropriations bill for the Department of Homeland Security, or extend the existing Continuing Resolution to provide funding for all DHS agencies, including the United States Coast Guard, we will be unnecessarily creating short-term havoc with potentially long-term repercussions.

This makes absolutely no sense, especially in light of the heightened risk of potential terrorist attacks that have been in the news.

The Coast Guard is our first, our only, line of defense protecting U.S. maritime boundaries from these threats abroad. It is irresponsible to subject the Coast Guard to a partial shutdown and ask active duty Coast Guardsmen and women to work without pay simply to express a hard-headed disagreement with the administration over immigration policy.

In closing Mr. Chairman, the Coast Guard prides itself on being *Semper Paratus*, or “Always Ready.” That is a fitting motto for a very proud institution.

I hope ultimately that common sense might prevail this week to prevent the House majority from unwittingly compromising the ability of the Coast Guard to protect Americans on the sea, protect America from threats delivered by sea, and protect the sea itself. Too much is at stake. Thank you.