

**Floor Statement of the Honorable John Garamendi
Floor Consideration of H.R. 5769, the Howard Coble Coast Guard and Maritime
Transportation Act of 2014, Under Suspension of the Rules**

December 3, 2014

Thank you, Mr. Rahall, for yielding me time. I rise in strong support of H.R. 5769, the Howard Coble Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Act of 2014.

As explained by the previous speakers, this bill is bipartisan, bicameral legislation to reauthorize funding for Fiscal Year 2015 for the United States Coast Guard and Coast Guard Reserve, and the Federal Maritime Commission.

This legislation includes many important provisions that were contained in H.R. 4005, Coast Guard authorization legislation that was passed and reported by voice vote by the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee on February 11, and passed overwhelmingly by the House on April 1 of this year. As such, I strongly support H.R. 5769 and urge members on both sides to support its passage.

Maintaining safe, reliable and efficient maritime commerce that enables our foreign and domestic trade to fuel the U.S. economy remains as important today as it was in 1790 when former Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton established the U.S. Revenue Cutter Service.

This legislation will provide our Coast Guard with the resources and policy tools they need to meet the challenges presented by the ever-evolving economic and security demands of our nation.

I want to express my genuine appreciation to Coast Guard Subcommittee Chairman Duncan Hunter and his outstanding staff for their willingness to work with me and several other Democrat members to address many of the issues raised by us throughout the legislative process.

Additionally, enough cannot be said about the leadership and support of Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman, Bill Shuster, and Ranking Democrat Member, Nick Rahall, who created by their own bipartisan example the right circumstances that fostered good faith negotiations and fair compromise.

First and foremost, the bill includes several non-controversial administrative and management directives to better align the Coast Guard's mission needs with its long-term capital planning and annual budget requests.

Additionally, the bill would grant the Coast Guard with greater flexibility to augment active duty forces and provide explicit cooperative agreement authority to enhance the Coast Guard's ability to develop beneficial partnerships with other maritime stakeholders.

The bill would also provide new guidance to the Coast Guard as it continues to re-build its offshore fleet of cutters, including the granting of multi-year procurement authority for the new Offshore Patrol Cutter (OPC) which will help expedite the construction of this new class of cutter once a final design is selected next year.

I am particularly pleased that this legislation would advance several positive policy initiatives to reinvigorate the U.S. merchant marine and improve maritime transportation.

Most noteworthy, this legislation would direct the administration to enforce our cargo preference laws and regulations, a move which is long overdue and needed.

Additionally, this legislation would require the Department of Transportation to develop a new National Maritime Strategy and direct the Government Accountability Office to conduct an assessment of how the future export trade in liquefied natural gas would affect job creation in the maritime industry. I also fully support language that would reauthorize the Small Shipyard Grant Program.

I welcome these opportunities to chart a new course forward to improve the competitiveness of the U.S. flag fleet on the high seas, to increase opportunities for short sea shipping, and to expand our commercial shipbuilding industrial base.

I am also pleased that this legislation will advance significant new policies to finally force the Federal Government – the Coast Guard especially -- to take constructive actions to address the implications of a thawing Arctic region and the imminent demands for commercial maritime transportation and resource development across this vast region.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, H.R. 5769 is responsible legislation that would provide budget stability for the Coast Guard, advance sensible policy reforms, and promote our merchant marine. The bill deserves the support of members from both sides and I urge an “aye” vote.

Thank you and I yield back the balance of my time.