

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5051
MINORITY (202) 225-5074

<http://oversight.house.gov>

MEMORANDUM

December 6, 2019

To: Members of the Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

Fr: Committee Staff

Re: Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, Committee on Oversight and Reform & Subcommittee on Transportation and Maritime Security, Committee on Homeland Security Joint Hearing on “Righting the Ship: The Coast Guard Must Improve its Processes for Addressing Harassment, Bullying, and Retaliation”

On **Wednesday, December 11, 2019, at 10:00 a.m., in room 2154 of the Rayburn House Office Building**, the Subcommittees will hold a joint hearing to examine how the Coast Guard is handling complaints of harassment and bullying.

I. BACKGROUND

Under 14 U.S.C. §101, the Coast Guard “shall be a military service and a branch of the armed forces of the United States.”¹ The Coast Guard is currently located in the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).² The Coast Guard is the smallest of the military services, comprised of approximately 42,000 members who carry out 11 official missions, including search and rescue, marine environmental protection, ice breaking, drug and migrant interdiction, and the management of navigation aids.³ The Coast Guard Academy, located in New London, Connecticut, is a 4-year service academy offering nine majors. The Academy’s entire student body numbers just over 1,000 cadets.⁴

¹ 14 U.S.C. §101.

² 14 U.S.C. §103.

³ U.S. Coast Guard, *We Are the U.S. Coast Guard* (accessed on Dec. 5, 2019) (online at www.gocoastguard.com/About-USCG).

⁴ United States Coast Guard Academy, *About the USCGA* (accessed on Dec. 5, 2019) (online at www.uscga.edu/aboutcga/).

II. HEARING PURPOSE

In December 2018, the Office of Inspector General (OIG) at DHS issued a report finding that a Lieutenant Commander stationed at the Coast Guard Academy “was retaliated against on the basis of her complaints, in violation of the Military Whistleblower Protection Act.” The OIG’s report also identified “potential disparities” and inconsistencies in the handling of harassment complaints at the Academy.⁵

This hearing will review the results of an 18-month-long investigation by the Committee on Oversight and Reform and the Committee on Homeland Security to examine the handling of complaints of harassment, retaliation, and bullyin by the Coast Guard. The hearing will consider specifically the handling of allegations at the Coast Guard Academy, including those raised by the Lieutenant Commander whose case was reviewed by the OIG. The hearing will also examine the Coast Guard’s responses to disparities identified in the Equity Scorecard review conducted at the Academy’s request by the Center for Urban Education at the University of Southern California. According to the Scorecard, African American cadets have been consistently less likely to graduate from the Coast Guard Academy than the all-cadet average and consistently more likely to be charged with Class I disciplinary offenses—the most serious level of offense.⁶

III. WITNESSES

Admiral Karl L. Schultz (*invited*)

Commandant
United States Coast Guard

Lt. Cmdr. Kimberly Young-McLear, Ph.D.

Permanent Commissioned Teaching Staff
United States Coast Guard Academy

Mr. Jackson Eaton

Deputy Assistant Inspector General for Special Reviews and Evaluations
Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General

Staff Contacts: Lucinda Lessley, Courtney French, Evie Freeman, and Candyce Phoenix at (202) 225-5051.

⁵ Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General, *Whistleblower Retaliation Report of Investigation Regarding Alleged Reprisal Against a USCG Lieutenant Commander* (Dec. 4, 2018) (online at www.oig.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/assets/2018/WRROI-W17-USCG-WPU-16018.pdf).

⁶ U.S. Coast Guard Academy, 2017 Vital Signs Report (online at <https://cue.usc.edu/files/2018/04/Vital-Signs-Report-FINAL-032818-V2.pdf>).