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Congress of the United States
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COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEES:
DEFENSE
HOMELAND SECURITY

January 14, 2026

Chairman Graves, Ranking Member Larsen, and Members of the Committee:

Mahalo for the opportunity to share my priorities for matters under your Committee's jurisdiction for the 119th Congress. In particular, I ask for your continued support of the U.S. Coast Guard, especially its critical role in the Indo-Pacific.

My home state of Hawai'i relies heavily on and has benefited greatly from the presence of the Coast Guard. We fully appreciate the Coast Guard's direct support of Hawai'i residents, both generally and through its District Oceania headquarters in Honolulu, in performance of its statutory missions like search and rescue and maritime environmental protection. But I would like to especially highlight the Coast Guard's indispensable role beyond Hawai'i throughout the broader Pacific.

The Pacific Islands region has long held critical importance to our country on a number of fronts. However, our engagement has suffered from cycles of insufficient focus, attention and presence, a situation the People's Republic of China (PRC) has been only too willing to exploit. This includes the PRC's Coast Guard, which falls under the People's Armed Police, a paramilitary force that reports to the PRC's Central Military Commission, as well as its maritime militia, also a projection of its armed forces.

Our Coast Guard is uniquely positioned to advance our engagement, especially in the face of rising tensions in the Indo-Pacific region. The Coast Guard's expertise lends itself particularly strengthening presence and partnerships, focusing on maritime law enforcement and addressing "gray zone" tactics through capacity building, joint patrols and other means. In addition, the Coast Guard has a respected track record of assisting partner nations, especially the island nations of the Pacific, with their real-world challenges, from maritime domain awareness, exclusive economic zone and fisheries protection (including through joint shiprider agreements) high seas fisheries treaty enforcement, transnational law enforcement, search and rescue and humanitarian aid.

For all of these reasons, the white hulls of the Coast Guard are widely accepted and welcomed throughout the Indo-Pacific, and leaders in the region have consistently requested a larger Coast Guard presence. Yet, despite its current and especially potential contributions to our Indo-Pacific

engagement, the reality is that the Coast Guard does not have the full suite of authorities and resources to conduct its expanding mission.

As one response, to enhance the Coast Guard's role, Congressman Trent Kelly and I introduced H.R. 3397, the Pacific Ready Coast Guard Act. This bill would help our Coast Guard transform into one that is fully prepared to take on the unique challenges and opportunities that the Pacific region poses in this Pacific Century. Specifically, it would establish a Coast Guard-led Center of Expertise in Indo-Pacific Maritime Governance. Its mission would be to work with partner nations to provide and facilitate education and research on maritime governance best practices, including how to build critical regional state capacity.

Additionally, our bill would also require the Coast Guard to issue an annual plan for its operations in the Indo-Pacific, evaluate the feasibility of a standing Indo-Pacific Maritime Group to conduct humanitarian and law enforcement missions in the Indo-Pacific, review the feasibility of establishing more forward operating bases in the Pacific and advise on expanding Coast Guard attaché positions in U.S. embassies in the region. Thanks to bipartisan support of our bill, the provision requiring the Coast Guard to issue an annual plan for its operations in the Indo-Pacific was signed into law with the Fiscal Year 2026 National Defense Authorization Act after its inclusion in the Coast Guard Authorization Act.

The Pacific Ready Coast Guard Act will further focus on specific areas where Coast Guard operations and resources in the Indo-Pacific should be updated and expanded to match the Coast Guard's expanded mission and to fully realize its potential contributions to our increased engagement throughout this critical region. I ask for the Committee's continued consideration and support of our measure.

I sincerely appreciate this Committee's consideration of the bill and the Coast Guard's presence in the critical Indo-Pacific region.

With aloha,



Ed Case
Hawai'i-First District