

Rep. Van Drew (NJ-02) - Full Committee on Appropriations Testimony

Good Afternoon Chair DeLauro and Ranking Member Granger. Thank you for providing the opportunity to testify before the House Committee on Appropriations.

Over the past weeks I have testified before many Appropriations subcommittees to advocate for projects of great importance to my district. I hope that the committee considers each of these projects and provides as much funding as the committee is able. These Community Projects are worthwhile investments that will not only benefit the local community but will strengthen the United States as a whole.

Today, I am here to speak about a project much larger in scope and of great national importance. I respectfully request that the Committee provide \$55 million to the U.S. Coast Guard to initiate Phase One of the Training Center Cape May Barracks Recapitalization project through the Construction and Improvements Accounts. This project is included in the Coast Guard's Fiscal Year 2022 budget request, as the #1 project in the Major Shore and Housing category.

Training Center Cape May is the Coast Guard's sole accession point for its enlisted workforce. 80% of the Coast Guard's total workforce is absorbed through Training Center Cape May. The existing barracks were constructed in the 1960's and are in serious need of modernization. The proposed Four-Phase project will reconstruct the entire barracks infrastructure and provide truly phenomenal benefits for the Coast Guard. The requested \$55 million is to execute the first phase of the project, which will demolish the oldest barracks facility and construct a brand new 66,000 square foot barracks.

There are 3 Key benefits to this project:

- 1) This project will expand the Training Center's throughput by 15-20%.
- 2) This project will modernize classrooms with digital infrastructure.
- 3) This project will allow the Coast Guard to achieve its objective of 50-50 gender parity.

The U.S Coast Guard is expanding operations across the country and across the world. Whether executing freedom of navigation operations in the South China Sea or conducting search and rescue operations off the U.S. Coast, the Coast Guard has a lot to do and plans on doing even more in the coming decades.

The United States can build all the cutters in the world, but you need personnel to operate those vessels. Most of those personnel come through Training Center Cape May. The proposed barracks recapitalization will increase the Training Center's throughput by 15-20%, or up to 1,000 additional service members a year. This investment ensures that the Coast Guard has the workforce it needs to accomplish its mission at home and abroad.

The newly constructed barracks will include classrooms equipped with the digital infrastructure necessary to ensure the highest quality training. We not only need more Coasties, we need them to be as prepared as possible to execute the Coast Guard mission.

A major objective of the Coast Guard is to achieve 50-50 gender parity in the Coast Guard, 50% men and 50% women. As it stands, the Training Center is only able to accommodate about 30% female recruits. Again, over 80% of the Coast Guard's enlisted workforce enters through the Training Center. To meet the Coast Guard's objective of 50-50 gender parity, this project must be funded.

This project is the Coast Guard's #1 Housing infrastructure priority. It will provide phenomenal benefits to the Coast Guard and the United States. I urge you to provide the requested funding, so that our Coast Guard men and women have access to every tool possible to prepare themselves to execute the Coast Guard mission. Thank you for your time.