

U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Joins colleagues to introduce bipartisan Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2022

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Chair of the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee's Oceans, Fisheries, Climate Change and Manufacturing Subcommittee, which oversees the U.S. Coast Guard, joined Chair Maria Cantwell (D-WA) and Ranking Member Roger Wicker (R-MS) to introduce legislation to reauthorize the Coast Guard for Fiscal Years 2022 and 2023.

The *Bipartisan Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2022* includes many of Senator Baldwin's priorities, including \$350 million for the Great Lakes Icebreaker (GLIB). For the first time, the USCG Authorization Act will also include a standalone Great Lakes subtitle in the bill. The only other geographic area that has a standalone section is the Arctic. This section includes:

- **Baldwin's Great Lakes Winter Commerce Act**, which has already been approved by the Commerce Committee, will improve the icebreaking capacity of the Great Lakes Fleet by requiring a Government Accountability Office report on updated and strengthened icebreaking standards on the Great Lakes and an assessment of the economic impact of vessel delays and mission needs for the GLIB program.
- **New database on icebreaking operations and commercial vessel and ferry transit**, including data on unsuccessful attempts to transit during ice season because of inadequate icebreaking ability. This database will help to bring additional icebreaking capacity to the Great Lakes and improve year-round commerce.

- **Great Lakes Snowmobile Acquisition Plan** to ensure the USCG has a plan to increase the number of these essential vehicles on the Great Lakes. Small USCG stations along the Great Lakes rely on these vehicles to help protect recreational ice fishing during winter months.

- **A study on sufficiency of Aviation Assets to meet mission needs.** Aviation assets are used in search and rescue on the Great Lakes. The 9th USCG District, which includes Wisconsin, stretches from Superior to as far east as North East Lake Ontario and is responsible for all search and rescue for over 6,700 miles of coast line. This geography puts a strain on the limited number of helicopters to conduct search and rescue. This study will highlight gaps in capabilities in meeting mission needs and improve the search and rescue capacity along the Great Lakes.

“Our United States Coast Guard members protect and secure our Great Lakes and are a crucial piece to keeping Wisconsin’s maritime economy moving forward,” **said Senator Baldwin.** “Inadequate icebreaking capacity in the Great Lakes costs us thousands of American jobs and millions in business revenue, and this bipartisan legislation invests in the icebreaking resources needed to support our maritime industry and our Made in America economy. This critical legislation will help mitigate devastating climate-related events, invest in climate resilient Coast Guard infrastructure at places like Sturgeon Bay and will increase support for childcare, housing, and education needed to do right by our service members and veterans.”

“The Coast Guard keeps our maritime economy moving and our ports and waterways secure. This bill makes the investments needed to support that core mission, and will also help the Coast Guard crack down on illegal fishing, improve oil spill response, and bolster our nation’s presence in the Arctic,” **said Senator Cantwell.** “The bill also invests in the Coast Guard’s most valuable resource: its people. We must expand training and education opportunities for Coasties and improve housing, childcare, and medical services so that the Coast Guard can recruit and retain a cutting edge and diverse workforce.”

“The American people depend on the U.S. Coast Guard now more than ever,” **said Senator Wicker.** “The Coast Guard can always be counted on to save American lives, protect our homeland, and keep maritime transportation flowing safely, but it is time we do better for our service members. This bill would take a major step toward addressing needs such as deteriorating buildings, outdated equipment, and a lack of adequate funding. I look forward to working with my colleagues to advance this legislation quickly.”

The *Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2022* would support the following national priorities:

- **Cracking Down on Illegal Fishing and Forced Labor:** The bill includes language to improve traceability and intergovernmental coordination needed to catch illegal fishermen on the high seas, as well as train NOAA and Coast Guard personnel to identify instances of forced labor and oppressive child labor in the fishing industry. This section would also strengthen the tools that NOAA and the Department of Homeland Security have to end illegal fishing and forced labor, including denial of port privileges, certification, training, and capacity building in countries working to cut down on illegal fishing activity.
- **Boosting USCG Arctic presence:** The bill would authorize \$841 million for the third Polar Security Cutter and \$20 million to establish the Arctic Security Cutter program office. This represents the first major step toward building the next generation of medium polar icebreakers to support maritime transportation, tourism, research, national security, and environmental protection missions in the emerging Arctic.
- **Investing in Shoreside Infrastructure:** The bill would authorize \$3 billion to address infrastructure repair and replacement backlogs. It would also require better transparency regarding the outstanding shore side infrastructure needs by requiring an annual submission to Congress. This will allow members of Congress to better advocate for funding to address projects in their states and districts, including some of the Coast Guard's unfunded priorities for Fiscal Year 2022.
- **Reducing Sexual Assault and Harassment at Sea:** The bill would improve oversight and investigations of sexual assault and harassment in the maritime industry and within the Coast Guard. The bill provides the Coast Guard the authority to revoke mariner credentials if the mariner has committed certain sex crimes. It defines sexual harassment and establishes a process for mariners to report crimes to the Coast Guard. The bill would also strengthen Coast Guard policy to ensure that members who are victims of sexual assault are provided care as soon as possible when deployed upon a vessel, or serving in a remote location. It would expand penalties for the failure to report a sexual assault and harassment at sea.
- **Expanding Options for Childcare:** The bill expands the Coast Guard childcare subsidy program, which helps Coast Guard families pay for childcare services. The bill would authorize \$25 million (a 56 percent increase over current

authorization) and expand eligibility so families are able to use the subsidy for additional types of childcare, such as nannies and multigenerational support.

- **Expanding Access to Medical Care, Education and Training:** The bill would improve access to medical care by authorizing research into expanding telemedicine access for members stationed in remote units like Cape Disappointment. The legislation would also establish a behavioral health policy and raise the limit on Coast Guard members permitted to be enrolled in post-graduate programs, increasing the number of Coast Guard members receiving training in the medical field.
- **Increasing Access to Affordable Housing:** Coast Guard units are often located in locations in coastal resort communities and large coastal cities where housing costs have skyrocketed. The national housing shortage, aging Coast Guard housing, and short-term vacation rentals have left many Coast Guard families without affordable and safe options. This bill would require the Coast Guard to study and develop a plan to improve access to housing.
- **Assisting Members with Fertility Treatments:** This bill would establish a pilot program to assist Coast Guard families with fertility treatments and require that the Coast Guard add at least five behavioral health specialists with training in family issues such as fertility, adoption, and child loss. It would also establish a pilot program allowing members to request to transfer to billets that are located near military medical facilities that provide fertility treatment.
- **Promoting Diversity Within the Coast Guard:** This bill aims to promote the representation of women and racial or ethnic minorities within the Coast Guard. It would require the Coast Guard to report to Congress on actions taken in response to the 2021 RAND representation report, develop a 10-year strategy to enhance diversity through recruitment and accession, and establish a partnership program with an institution serving underrepresented communities. The bill would also expand the Coast Guard Junior ROTC Program to include partnerships in each Coast Guard district across the nation.
- **Supporting Commercial Space:** The bill would grant the Coast Guard temporary authority to allow for autonomous vessels to be used for space recovery operations in certain circumstances. This will improve safety as spacecraft return from space.

View the bill text [here](#).

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