



125 N. West Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

1-800-FRA-1924
703-683-1400
703-549-6610 (fax)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 12, 2010

CONTACT: Lauren Armstrong
(703) 683-1400 ext. 126

FRA Questions USCG Budget and Personnel Cuts

The Fleet Reserve Association (FRA) is seriously concerned about proposals to reduce funding and manpower for the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) in FY2011. The Administration is calling for a three-percent cut to the service's budget and a 1,100-billet reduction in manpower for the country's smallest military service.

“The expanding role of the Coast Guard requires resources and personnel to replace aging infrastructure and execute the service's multiple missions,” says Joe Barnes, FRA's National Executive Director. “FRA believes the proposed budget is inadequate to sustain mission readiness and morale within the service's active duty and Reserve communities.”

In the past decade, the Coast Guard's responsibilities have grown tremendously as part of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). In addition to its traditional roles of monitoring marine safety, supporting significant drug and migrant interdiction missions, aiding commercial navigation and enforcing environmental regulations, the service is also participating in security missions in Iraq, offering aid in Haiti, and providing air defense for the National Capitol Region. According to Coast Guard Commandant, Admiral Thad Allen, the Coast Guard is “ready and resilient,” but “is more fragile this year than last.”

“FRA notes Admiral Allen's past requests for increasing manpower and also calls for adequate DHS resources to ensure pay and benefits for these service members remain on par with their Department of Defense counterparts,” says Barnes. “We consistently reference these requests in our congressional testimony, written statements and personal interaction with members of Congress and their staff.”

In 2009, the Association stressed the importance of increased USCG manpower to the Senate Subcommittee on Oceans, Atmosphere, Fisheries and the Coast Guard and the House Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation, stating the increase “would translate to a higher level of mission effectiveness.”

Despite its concerns regarding manpower and overall funding, FRA is pleased the FY2011 budget includes \$14 million to improve Coast Guard housing, which is another priority issue for FRA. Responses to the Association's recent online survey revealed that housing is a particular concern for USCG personnel, who are often assigned to high-cost, coastal areas that are far from military infrastructure.

FRA is a congressionally chartered, non-profit organization representing the interests of current and former enlisted members of the U.S. Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard. In addition to its advocacy work on Capitol Hill in support of enlisted personnel, FRA also sponsors a national Americanism Essay Contest and assists its members with disaster relief grants. The Association has recently established an Education Foundation that awards scholarships to deserving college students.

The Association is celebrating its 85th anniversary and was named after the Navy's policy of transferring personnel to the Fleet Reserve or Fleet Marine Corps Reserve after 20 or more years of active duty, but less than the 30 years required for retirement purposes. Although the membership requirements have changed as the Association has evolved, our purpose – to preserve and enhance military pay, benefits and quality-of-life programs – is as important today as it was in 1924. As the collective voice for all Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard enlisted personnel, FRA speaks on behalf of its members on Capitol Hill. There is no law protecting military benefits, so FRA is here to stand guard.