

CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

RESOLUTION NO. 2013-18

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA REQUESTING THAT THE UNITED STATES PRESIDENT AND U.S. CONGRESS RESTORE CONTINUING AND REALISTIC CAPITAL AND OPERATING BUDGETS IN SUPPORT OF THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

**WHEREAS**, our nation today demands more from the U.S. Coast Guard, than at any time in the service's history; and

**WHEREAS**, the "Federal Shutdown" and lack of necessary federal funding have curtailed or suspended many services that are critically important to Alaska and the nation; and

**WHEREAS**, although one of the five armed services, the U.S. Coast Guard is the only one not located in the more adequately funded Department of Defense; and

**WHEREAS**, the U.S. Coast Guard essential personnel still face unprecedented funding cuts and growing demands that threaten their ability to operate and serve; and

**WHEREAS**, the U.S. Coast Guard continues to be given new responsibilities and assignments as well as woefully inadequate operation and capital funding expecting them to do more with less; and

**WHEREAS**, the U.S. Coast Guard can no longer remain a world-class maritime law-enforcement agency, armed service and emergency rescue responder; given the inadequate resources the federal government provides.

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Assembly of the City and Borough of Sitka, Alaska as a proud "Coast Guard City USA," by this resolution formally requests that the U.S. President and U.S. Congress fully fund the U.S. Coast Guard to enable this essential armed service provider to continue to deliver the many critical services the federal government has mandated.

**PASSED, APPROVED AND ADOPTED** by the Assembly of the City and Borough of Sitka, Alaska on this 12th day of November 2013.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mim McConnell, Mayor

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Sara Peterson, CMC  
Municipal Clerk



October 30, 2013

## The Coast Guard Still Needs Rescuing

Posted: 10/24/2013 3:40 pm

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After 223 years you'd think the Coast Guard would have proved its usefulness to the nation. Instead, even after the government shutdown, its essential personnel still face unprecedented funding cuts and growing demands that threaten their ability to operate.

Although one of the nation's five armed services, the Coast Guard is the only one not located in the pork-laden Department of Defense but living on far thinner gruel provided by a series of foster agencies including, since 2003, the Department of Homeland Security.

The House Appropriations Committee recently complained about the Coast Guard's "egregious" 2014 funding cuts, castigating DHS's budget for eliminating essential functions without suggesting an end to the across-the-board budget sequester that's doing equal harm.

The Coast Guard is now facing a 5 percent budget cut even as sequestration costs it an additional 5 percent. Plans to modernize its mostly obsolete fleet are at "dead ahead slow."

Given its vast duties on the ocean, Great Lakes and rivers -- including Search And Rescue (saving an average of 10 people a day), port security, oil spill response, drug and migrant interdiction, ship inspections, fisheries enforcement, etc. -- the public interest might better be served by doubling their \$10 billion budget. After all, Republican senators' asking price for immigration reform remains \$30 billion for increased border security, including a "surge" of 20,000 new border agents at a time when illegal crossings on the U.S.-Mexico border are at a 40-year low. Instead of expanding the Border Patrol they might consider adding those new bodies to the 43,000 active-duty men and women who secure our maritime borders: the Atlantic, Pacific, Caribbean, Gulf, Great Lakes and Arctic Ocean, only not so much nowadays with Coast Guard offshore patrols down 15 percent due to budget cuts.

Without strong advocates in Washington, the service long ago learned to internalize its lack of support by promising to "Do more with less." Its leadership even came to believe that giving taxpayers more "bang for the buck" might win them support from politicians who complain about government waste. What "doing more with less" actually got them is less.

A few examples: In 1994, the Clinton administration called for "streamlining" of the federal government and asked agencies to propose ways to operate with a 10 percent reduction in force. While other agencies used bureaucratic delays to avoid the cuts the Coast Guard voluntarily reduced its personnel by 12 percent, laying off 4,000 people. Still, on 9/11 they managed to coordinate the waterborne evacuation of half a million people from lower Manhattan.

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina in 2005 the Coast Guard proved to be the only part of government functioning in New Orleans and along the Gulf Coast, rescuing over 33,000 people that week. Congress and the Bush White House gave them no budget boost.

The stress of being under-resourced became apparent during the BP oil disaster in 2010 when so many Coast Guard resources were sent to the Gulf that oversight of major American ports was left in the hands of junior offices and offshore drug smuggling and illegal fishing spiked.

In 2011 the Coast Guard led U.S. forces into Haiti following that nation's devastating earthquake but ten of the twelve aging Cutters sent there suffered breakdowns including two that required emergency repairs and one that had to be dry docked.

Luckily by the time Superstorm Sandy hit in 2012 the federal disaster response system had been fixed so that the Coast Guard didn't have to act alone.

The service is now in the process of replacing its aged high seas ships with eight modern National Security Cutters. Still, last year the Obama administration proposed cutting the number from eight to six, claiming the Navy could pick up the slack. The newest federal budget has reinstated the seventh ship while Congress and the White House argue over the eighth. Meanwhile the Navy, with 16 times the Coast Guard's budget, is on track to acquire 20 Littoral (coastal) Warfare ships of the same size and price and is lobbying for 32 more. The Navy's R&D budget is actually larger than the Coast Guard's entire budget.

Yet the Coast Guard keeps getting new assignments like protecting America's newest blue water coast emerging with the melting ice of the Arctic. While recommissioning an icebreaker from the 1970s Congress has failed to prioritize new icebreakers, leaving the service with a total of two plus one on the Great Lakes. Nor has new money been allocated for the additional people, boats and aircraft needed to operate at the top of the world. As a result Coast Guard Commandant Admiral Robert Papp recently announced that for at least the next 10 years the Coast Guard will not open a sector (area) station in Barrow, Alaska, on the north slope but continue to operate in the Arctic by sending one of its National Security Cutters -- at

present there are only three in operation -- up to the ice each summer. That will seriously cut into its anti-drug and pirate fishing patrols.

In response to budget cuts and the sequester Admiral Papp has admitted the service has passed the point of diminishing returns, pointing out that, for example, it is now interdicting fewer multi-ton drug shipments (the Coast Guard captures more cocaine than the DEA, FBI and all state and local law enforcement combined). But before his revelation had time to sink in he defaulted to the service's traditional position of making due, telling a congressional committee this spring, "We will make the best use of the resources you provide to safely and efficiently conduct operations in the area of greatest risk to the nation."

What he might have said is, "The Coast Guard can no longer remain a world-class maritime law-enforcement agency and armed service given the inadequate resources you now provide." That is, he could have sounded more like the heads of the other Armed Services when they testified with great theatricality about the impact of the sequester on them. But in Admiral Papp's case he'd have the added advantage of telling the truth. The Coast Guard is the only armed service that actually has no fat to cut. In fact it is being starved of lean muscle. And no one seems to care enough to rescue them.

# **Lapse in Federal Funding Impact on the USCG**

## **Services and activities curtailed or suspended:**

- Most new commercial vessel construction inspections and reinstallations
- Seaman documentation and licensing
- Vessel documentation and measurements
- Aids to navigation preventive maintenance
- Bridge administration activity
- Recreational boating safety activities except defect notifications
- Community relations events
- Most procurement and contracting work
- General administration and oversight of current acquisitions
- Coordination meetings for non-exempt activities

## **CG facilities closed or minimally staffed:**

- National Maritime Center
- Regional Exam Centers
- Vessel Documentation Center