

**Senator Maria Cantwell**

**Remarks at Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation Mark-Up to Consider the  
*Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2019***

**July 31st, 2019**

CANTWELL: Thank you Mr. Chairman, and thank you for working on these two important pieces of legislation, and having another markup in the committee. I want to first thank our staffs for working so hard and diligently through the night last night to finalize these two pieces of legislation, and again, as you mentioned last markup, they do an excellent job and we so much appreciate everybody's collaboration on getting these important issues addressed.

I also want to thank Senators Sullivan and Markey today for their work related to the Coast Guard bill. We are just a few days away from celebrating the Coast Guard day on August 4<sup>th</sup>, and this is a great piece of legislation to help in celebrating that. I appreciate Senator Markey's work on the commercial fishing vessel safety part of this legislation; Senator Baldwin's Great Lakes icebreaker authorization; Senator Peter's oil spill improvements in Lake Michigan; Senator Blumenthal's sexual assault prevention and support of the academy that is part of this legislation.

In the state of Washington we have a proud maritime heritage, so the Coast Guard is an integral part of our community, and this legislation moves the ball forward on important priorities, as the Chair mentioned, for the men and women that work for the Coast Guard. We found out that the Coast Guard has one of the first paid family-leave programs in the nation, and that was because the Coast Guard determined – with 40 percent of their workforce being women – that if they wanted to continue to promote them up the ranks, that they better figure out how to do a paid leave program. So this legislation continues to improve on that in several ways.

I also want to thank the Chairman for this important legislation, which I believe is a milestone in the recognition that we are an Arctic nation. I believe that the Arctic is a national security issue. If we want ships to pass through the Arctic as other countries do – because it is a cheaper, faster way from Asia to Europe – and we want to have access to that in an untold way, and we want fishing and environmental issues to be addressed, we too need to recognize that we need an icebreaking fleet. So this legislation formally authorizes three new heavy icebreakers and three new medium icebreakers for the first time. I think this is a giant step forward in recognizing that we are an Arctic nation and we plan to participate in the Northwest Passage.

I look forward to the work that will be done on other pieces of important legislation here, particularly in Puget Sound, and the need to protect the Southern resident orcas. That is why this legislation moves the needle on orca conservation in a better way to protect Southern resident orcas in Puget Sound. It creates a pilot program based on successful pilot programs in Vancouver, British Columbia, to reduce the impact of vessel noise from large ships, and it also requires assessment and recommendation to improve Coast Guard efforts to enforce vessel traffic buffer zones in Puget Sound.

Also, we know that it's important for our communities to continue to improve safety, and that is why this bill requires a GAO study to make recommendations regarding tsunami vertical evacuation infrastructure needs. So much of Washington's coast is populated by communities that don't have the

resources to prepare to the response, and so this bill will help in providing resources to make sure communities are planning for such an event.

The bill also, as the Chairman mentioned, helps in the recruitment, retainment, and investment in women in the Coast Guard workforce. Even though the Coast Guard Academy is almost 40 percent women, the Coast Guard as a whole is only 15 percent, so we need to invest in recruiting and keeping this talent, and this bill will help take a major step forward. Also, the bill invests in vital child care facilities for the Coast Guard, and we so appreciate working across the aisle to make this part of the legislation.

Finally, the bill includes critical improvements to oil spill response and prevention. It responds to oil spill in the future; it mandates a requirement to update the U.S. research plan to improve oil spill response and prevention over ten years; and requires research and technology evaluation for all classes of oil, because the Coast Guard needs to be an expert on the technology that is needed if such a catastrophic event happens. So I want to again thank all the men and women who serve in the Coast Guard, and thank Chairman Wicker, Senator Sullivan and Senator Markey for working in such a bipartisan fashion on this bill.