

**U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell**  
**Coast Guard Authorization Act Floor Speech**

**March 5, 2025**

[\[AUDIO\]](#) [\[VIDEO\]](#)

**Sen. Cantwell:** Thank you, Mr. President. I rise to support Senator Cruz in our efforts here to pass the Coast Guard Bill. Chairman Cruz and I worked diligently on this bill in the last Congress with many of our colleagues.

Unfortunately, the clock ran out, and we are here today to pass this important legislation. We hope our House colleagues will just take this up and pass it as well. The Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2025 provides the tools that our Coast Guard needs now to protect our shores, keep our maritime moving, and the Coast Guard and its responsibilities need the support of this legislation.

All in, the Coast Guard is responsible for facilitating over \$5 trillion of maritime commerce in our waterways. The Coast Guard is also the sole operator of icebreakers in our polar regions, and they are our primary force charged with the stopping of pirate fishing from China, Russia and other dark fishing fleets that are stealing American fishing jobs. The issues in the Arctic are real, and we have highlighted them many times, and this bill will help address that.

Passage of this measure now will enable us to further provide the Coast Guard additional assets like icebreakers, hopefully in the upcoming reconciliation bill, and the Coast Guard also helps stops the flow of illegal drugs in the maritime environment. This legislation also strengthens each of the Coast Guard's missions and authorizes a 30% budget increase to support that workforce.

I noted the President last night talked about shipbuilding in general. We're enthusiastic about that mission. I know that in budget reconciliation, people are already, the Chairman of the Committee, talking about the Coast Guard and \$20 billion to help us recapitalize our Coast Guard fleet. Replacing the aging and inadequate equipment, from ice breakers to offshore patrol cutters to heavy weather boats to MH-60 helicopters and C-130 aircrafts are all important.

But beyond the modernization, there are other things. It includes in Base Seattle, the homeport to our nation's current icebreakers, the future heavy icebreaker fleet, and the needs for the Arctic nation that we are, now defending against Chinese and Russian aggression. The bill also reauthorizes the Puget Sound Whale Desk for another two years, [which] helps ships steer clear of our cherished orca and whale populations. It also increases collaboration between Washington tribes and the Coast Guard. And the bill invests in critical safety programs. We're very proud of all of that.

But one of the most important things in the bill is, obviously, dealing with the workforce. Making sure that we have access to medical care, housing, and behavioral health, and to deal with what we know in 2023 was a decades long, uncovered, sexual assault and sexual violence cover up in the Coast Guard.

Operation Fouled Anchor identified 62 substantiated incidents of rape, sexual assault, and sexual harassment perpetrated by at least 42 individuals. The Coast Guard took action on only two of those subjects.

Due to the lack of oversight, and the Coast Guard's mishandling of this, these individuals were allowed to retire, some at the grade of Commander, with full benefits, and they received no punishment. That is unacceptable.

In 2023 December, former Commandant Schultz admitted to withholding information from Congress and stating that, quote, he made this decision, and he stands by it, end quote. That is why, as Chairman, and working then with Senator Cruz and their oversight efforts, we did everything we could to make sure that this story came out and that we address it in this legislation.

This issue of failure to do this is – this is why we need transparency, this is why we need to make sure that we continue to address our workforce issues in the federal government.

The Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2025 would strengthen authorities and programs to hold perpetrators accountable, enhance investigative and legal processes, improve victim recovery services and access to care, as well as boosting training.

These reforms would extend the Coast Guard protections available to members of the armed forces in general, in the whole Department of Defense, and it establishes a comprehensive prevention training and reporting requirement to address the issues identified in our investigation.

Moving forward, we have more to do to support the Coast Guard. They needed our help with their assets, and they need access to shipyards. This morning, during the Commerce Committee, I said I would work with my colleagues on all the shipbuilding efforts to help us meet our key global shipping competitiveness issues, to ensure that American farmers and manufacturers have access to global markets, and to make sure that we continue to invest in the best people for the Coast Guard.

To do that, we have to pass this legislation and get it onto the President's desk.

So I thank my staff, Nikky Teutschel, Melissa Porter, Lila Helms, and all of the committee staff that worked on this bill. And again, thank the Chairman, Chairman Cruz, for bringing this bipartisan measure to the floor today.