

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 1, 2011

Admiral Robert J. Papp  
Commandant  
United States Coast Guard  
2100 Second Street, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20593-0001

Dear Admiral Papp,

We are writing to express our concerns about the lack of geographical diversity in this year's incoming class, the Class of 2015, at the United States Coast Guard Academy (USCGA) and urge the adoption of a congressional nominations process, which has a proven method of achieving greater geographic diversity.

Among our Nation's five service academies, the USCGA stands out for a number of reasons. The Academy provides a robust, tuition-free, four-year Bachelor of Science degree program that has a heavy emphasis on math, science, technology, and engineering. The USCGA holds the distinction of being the smallest of the five service academies, graduating an average of two-hundred and thirty cadets annually. Another key distinction is that unlike the U.S. Military Academy (West Point), the U.S. Naval Academy, the U.S. Air Force Academy, and the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy—the USCGA does not accept candidates through a congressional nominations process. Instead, the USCGA admits candidates through a process that closely resembles the admissions processes of civilian colleges and universities. Without a congressional nominations process, the applicant pool of candidates to the USCGA is predictably less geographically diverse than at the other academies. The inevitable result of a less geographically diverse applicant pool is *a less geographically diverse class*. The statistics for the Class of 2015 bear this out; in fact there was not a single appointment from Arkansas, Delaware, Louisiana, Mississippi, Montana, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Vermont, American Samoa, Northern Marina Islands, Puerto Rico, and U.S. Virgin Islands.

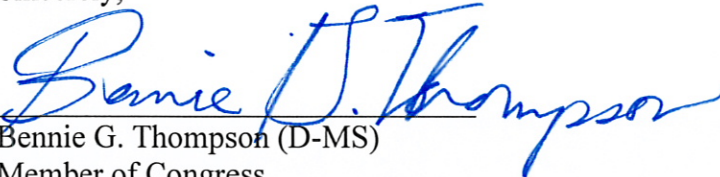
In order to foster greater geographical diversity at the USCGA, we strongly believe that the USCGA should work with Congress to facilitate the admission of candidates that meet the USCGA's rigorous admissions standards and were nominated by their Members of Congress. Opening the USCGA's admissions process to congressional nominations could certainly be done without lowering the institution's admissions standard or increasing class sizes.

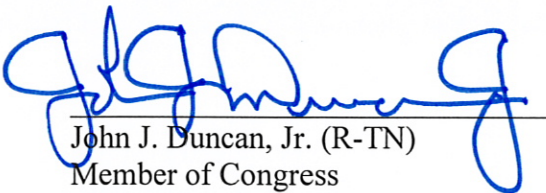
The Coast Guard has a wide range of missions—from the protection of ports and waterways to coastal security to waterways management. Accordingly, for the Coast Guard to maintain its "Always Ready" posture it looks to the USCGA to produce future leaders that are ready to execute all the Coast Guard's missions. Opening up the USCGA's admissions process to

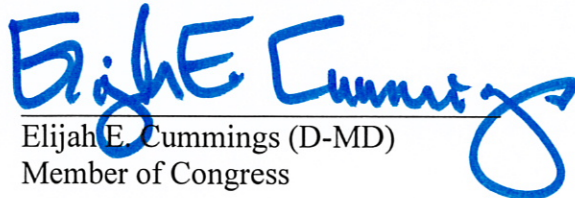
congressional nominations will help ensure that bright, patriot young people— from States and regions that are underrepresented in the Academy’s student population— have an opportunity to receive the benefit of a USCGA education and are put on a path to rewarding Coast Guard careers.

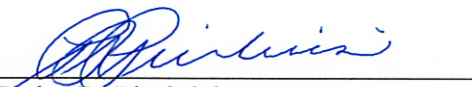
If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Rosaline Cohen, Chief Counsel for Legislation for the House Committee on Homeland Security, Democratic Staff at (202) 226-2616.

Sincerely,

  
Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)  
Member of Congress

  
John J. Duncan, Jr. (R-TN)  
Member of Congress

  
Elijah E. Cummings (D-MD)  
Member of Congress

  
Pedro R. Pierluisi (D-PR)  
Member of Congress