

Navy League Issues Statement to House of Representatives Cautioning Against Stripping U.S. Coast Guard Icebreaker Funding

Elimination of funds places U.S. Arctic strategy in jeopardy as China and Russia ramp up presence

ARLINGTON, Va. — Today, the Navy League of the United States National President Alan Kaplan issued the following letter, urging U.S. House of Representatives Speaker Paul Ryan and minority leader Nancy Pelosi to maintain the administration's \$750 million funding request for a U.S. Coast Guard icebreaker:

Dear Speaker Ryan and Leader Pelosi:

On behalf of the Navy League's 40,000 members, I write in alarm and concern over the stripping of the president's requested funds for the polar heavy icebreaker in the House Appropriations Committee's FY19 Department of Homeland Security funding bill. Congress and military leaders agree that the Arctic is a crucial and strategic area for our nation. Increased activity in the Arctic means we need a strong American presence.

Our only operational heavy icebreaker, the *Polar Star*, is 42 years old, operating 12 years beyond its expected lifespan. It will reach the end of its operational life in 2023 just as there is expected to be a boom in activity, including the opening of new shipping lanes, the presence of cruise ships, and an increase in exploring Arctic oil and gas reserves. Our competitors, including Russia and China, are investing heavily in their own Arctic presence: Russia has over 40 icebreakers, some of which are armed. China has three and is building a nuclear-powered icebreaker and has declared the area a "zone of priority development." We must ensure the new heavy icebreaker is delivered by 2023 or risk being excluded from this important region, just as its potential as a new trade route and its unexploited natural resources are being developed.

The Coast Guard's missions in the Arctic, including fisheries management, search-and-rescue activities and law-enforcement missions, will increase, and they must have the resources they need to meet challenges in this harsh environment and guarantee American presence. Many government agencies depend on the capability of American icebreakers, including the Department of Transportation, Department of the Interior, Department of Commerce, Department of Defense and the National Science Foundation, to perform their functions.

The Department of Homeland Security mission needs statement and Coast Guard studies have shown that the right number for secure American presence is three heavy and three medium icebreakers. The administration has requested \$750 million for icebreaker procurement in FY19 funds, and the Senate's version appropriated that amount; this request should be supported by the House as well.

It is disconcerting that these funds have been stripped. This program cannot be delayed any longer; timing is crucial to ensure America isn't left helpless in the Arctic. These funds should be restored in the FY19 Department of Homeland Security Appropriations bill when it comes to the floor.

Thank you,

Alan Kaplan

National President

Navy League of the United States

For more information on this issue, visit

<https://www.votervoice.net/NavyLeague/Campaigns/60071/Respond>.

For a PDF to link to this letter to Congress, visit https://filemanager.capwiz.com/filemanager/filemgr/navyleague/1_Navy_League_supports_full_funding_for_heavy_icebreakers.pdf.

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About the Navy League of the United States

The Navy League of the United States, founded in 1902 with the support of President Theodore Roosevelt, is a nonprofit civilian, educational and advocacy organization that supports America's sea services: the Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard and U.S.-flag Merchant Marine. Through national and local programs, the Navy League of the United States provides a powerful voice to educate the public and Congress on the importance of our sea services to our nation's defense, well-being and economic prosperity. The Navy League provides support to our sea services personnel and their families and youth programs, such as the Naval Sea Cadet Corps, Junior ROTC and Young Marines, that expose young people to the values of our sea services.