

Legislation to Improve the Quality of Life for Members of the U.S. Coast Guard Introduced

House Coast Guard & Maritime Transportation Ranking Member Frank LoBiondo (R-2nd) introduced bipartisan legislation to improve the quality of life for members of the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) and their families.

Currently, members of the Armed Services and their families enjoy several housing, educational and related benefits not afforded to their counterparts in the USCG, which is under the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

LoBiondo's legislation H.R. 2901, the "Coast Guard Service Member Benefits Improvement Act," seeks to remedy these discrepancies.

"The men and women of the U.S. Coast Guard, like members of the other Armed Services, dedicate their lives to serve their country. They ably serve alongside our Navy abroad and patrol and protect our nation at home. In turn, they should be entitled to the same benefits and the Coast Guard should have the authority to ensure equal opportunities are made available," said LoBiondo. "This bipartisan legislation would ensure such treatment."

House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee Ranking Republican John Mica (FL-07) and U.S. Representatives Howard Coble (NC-06), Gene Taylor (MS-04) and William Delahunt (MA-10) joined LoBiondo in introducing the "Coast Guard Service Member Benefits Improvement Act." LoBiondo's bipartisan legislation would:

Reauthorize housing authorities to enable the USCG to form public-private partnerships to build new housing for service members. Currently, there is \$272 million backlog in USCG housing;

Reassert the USCG Commandant's authority to establish child care centers for USCG dependents and to spend funds on teaching aids and supplies;

Authorize legal assistance to USCG reservists and their dependents;

Increase the retirement age for flag officers by 2 years to be consistent with the rest of the Armed Services;

Enable the USCG Commandant to spend funds to support chaplain led activities for USCG members and families, including family and youth retreats;

Enable the USCG to receive admission and services from the Armed Forces Retirement Home;

Ensure USCG service members and assets remain under the control of the Secretary of Homeland Security during a declared public health emergency;

Authorize the award of new service medals to USCG service members who commit valorous acts while under the command of the Secretary of Homeland Security.

The five Congressmen – LoBiondo, Mica, Coble, Taylor and Delahunt - are members of the Congressional Coast Guard caucus.