

**SJR**

**10**



# SENATOR ALAN AUSTERMAN

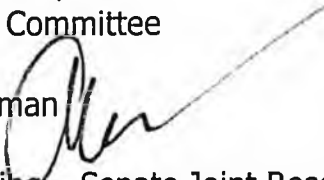
Alaska State Legislature

*Interim:* 112 Mill Bay Road, Kodiak, Alaska 99615 (907) 486-8872 • *Session:* State Capitol, Juneau, Alaska 99801 (907) 465-2487  
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## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** February 6, 2001

**TO:** Senator Gene Therriault, Chair  
Senate State Affairs Committee

**FROM:** Senator Alan Austerman 

**SUBJ:** Request for Scheduling – Senate Joint Resolution 10

I respectfully request the Senate State Affairs Committee schedule a hearing for Senate Joint Resolution 10 at your earliest convenience.

This resolution urges the United States Congress to fully fund the operational readiness and recapitalization requirements of the United States Coast Guard.

The bill and sponsor statement are attached.

Please contact Cliff Stone of my staff at 2696 as required.

Thank you for your consideration.



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### **SPONSOR STATEMENT – SJR 10**

The United States Coast Guard is this nation's oldest and its premier maritime agency. The history of the Service is very complicated because it is the amalgamation of five Federal agencies. These agencies; the Revenue Cutter Service, the Lighthouse Service, the Steamboat Inspection Service, the Bureau of Navigation, and the Lifesaving Service, were originally independent, but had overlapping authorities and were shuffled around the government under a variety of names until they were all finally united under the umbrella of the Coast Guard. The multiple missions and responsibilities of the modern Service are directly tied to this diverse heritage and the magnificent achievements of all of these agencies.

The Coast Guard, through its forefathers, is the oldest continuous seagoing service and has fought in almost every war since the Constitution became the law of the land in 1789. The Coast Guard has traditionally performed two roles in wartime. The first has been to augment the Navy with personnel and cutters. The second has been to undertake special missions, for which peacetime experiences have prepared the Service with unique skills.

High-seas search and rescue has long presented the Coast Guard with one of its greatest challenges. When disaster occurs, hundreds of lives may be at stake. In October 1980, while almost 200 miles off Sitka, the Dutch cruise ship Prinsendam was jarred by explosions and stopped dead in the water after a fire started in the engine room. In spite of rough seas and strong winds, four Coast Guard, one Air Force and two Canadian helicopters plucked more than 500 shipwreck survivors from crowded lifeboats. Many of the survivors, mostly senior citizens, were lifted in rescue baskets to the awaiting Coast Guard Cutter Boutwell. Not one life was lost. The Prinsendam sank seven days later. Although most rescues aren't as dramatic as this one, the Guard has saved the lives of hundreds of people; from recreational boaters to commercial mariners and fishermen on lakes, on rivers, in shore areas, and on the high seas.

DISTRICT C

Kodiak Archipelago • Southeast Islands

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The ecological responsibilities of the Service were greatly expanded by the purchase of Alaska in 1867. Fur seals were being hunted into extinction due to the value of their coats. In 1870 Congress restricted the number that could be killed. Beginning in 1894, small parties of Revenue Cutter Service personnel were camped on the Pribilof Islands to prevent raids on the rookeries. On 11 May 1908, Revenue Cutters were given the authority to enforce all Alaskan game laws. Clean waters have been a concern for many decades. The Refuse Act of 1899 was the first attempt to address the growing problem of pollution and was jointly enforced by the Army Corps of Engineers and the Revenue Cutter Service. Today, the current framework for the Coast Guard's Marine Environmental Protection program is the Federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1972. The 200-mile zone created by the Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976 quadrupled the offshore fishing area controlled by the United States. The Coast Guard has the responsibility of enforcing this law.

One of the most visible missions of the Coast Guard is boating safety. Their philosophy toward boating safety has been to educate the public rather than carry out punitive measures. The boating fatality rate during 1981 was 8.3 deaths for each 100,000 craft as compared to 21.4 deaths during 1965. There are over fourteen million boats in American waters requiring constant vigil.

In 1959, Fidel Castro took power in Cuba and within two years, the Coast Guard established patrols to aid refugees and to enforce neutrality, interdicting the transportation of men and arms. During the early 1970s, drug interception, took on increasing emphasis, which continues today. From 1963 through 1979, the Coast Guard seized 304 vessels, confiscated over \$4 billion in contraband and made 1,959 arrests.

It is not only this law enforcement authority, but also the Guard's military structure and the humanitarian functions that make it a unique arm of national security and enables it to support broad national goals.

We in Alaska are proud of the United States Coast Guard. It is my hope that through this resolution, the United States Congress hears a unified voice from our community. We want the Guard to remain "semper paratus" throughout the Twenty-First Century.