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## ***USCG Chief Petty Officers Association, Coast Guard Enlisted Association, and Sea Service Family, Foundation commend the introduction of S. 21 The Pay Our Coast Guard Act.***

WASHINGTON – On the 13<sup>th</sup> day of the current government shutdown, and the first day of the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress, **U.S. Senator John Thune (R-SD)**, **US Senator Roger Wicker (R-MS)**, **US Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA)**, **US Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-MS)**, **US Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT)**, **US Senator Doug Jones (D-AL)**, **US Senator Dan Sullivan (R-AK)**, **S Senator Susan Collins (R-ME)**, and **US Senator Brian Schatz (D-HI)**, today introduced bipartisan legislation to fund the payroll for the US Coast Guard, to include members on Active Duty, Reserves, Civilians, Contractors and Retirees.

“Our voice has been heard, and thanks to a bipartisan group of Senators, the “Pay our Coast Guard Act” has been introduced to the Senate. This bill is the right thing to do for the men and women who excel every day at keeping the Coast Guard ready, relevant and responsive. The passage of this bill will eliminate the effects of political posturing and its impact on our Coast Guard members who have volunteered to serve our nation,” says Jon Ostrowski who is the National President for the US Coast Guard Chief Petty Officers Association (CPOA). Ostrowski who himself served in the Coast Guard for 30 years, has not felt the effects of government shutdowns until recent years. He is concerned that this may become a regular occurrence for Congress and the Administration, and that all government employees should not have to suffer the price for political fighting.

“Many of our Coast Guard Enlisted Association (CGEA) members have little tenure in the Coast Guard, which hasn’t allowed ample time for saving enough money to sustain the lapse in even one paycheck. Our Coast Guard sacrifices so much to serve our great nation, and many of our CGEA members feel that they have been overlooked, due to the potential pay lapse” said Coast Guard Enlisted Association (CGEA) National President, Casey Lawrence. “We are grateful for the reintroduction of the “Pay Our Coast Guard Act,” as well as for all of those organizations and associations who stood alongside ours to see that Coast Guard pay continues.”

“I can’t think of a more perfect way to start off a Congressional year than to ensure one of the first pieces of legislation is a common-sense, bipartisan bill that everyone can rally behind and support. The men and women of the Coast Guard just spent the last two weeks in a whirlwind, with a lot of ups and downs. This shutdown has taken away from valuable time they should have been using to enjoy their families,

but instead they spent it stressed beyond belief,” mentioned Michael Little, Executive Director for Sea Service Family, Foundation (SSFF) and Coast Guard Spouse. Little, who also serves on the Board of Directors for the Coast Guard Mutual Assistance (CGMA), is also concerned about the impact the lack of a paycheck for the Coast Guard would have on relief societies like the one he serves on. “These societies rely on direct deposit allotments, and the lack of income could prevent them from being able to support Coasties in cases of real emergencies, because they will be diverting money to helping reduce the impact some families will face when it comes to buying groceries, paying rent, etc.”

On December 22, SSFF teamed up with CPOA and CGEA to start a Congressional Alert for Coast Guard families to be able to voice their concerns to Congress and rallied behind a piece of legislation introduced in 2014 by Senator John Thune. The campaign generated 141,015 letters, to every member of the House and Senate, and came from Coasties all over the world. By the time S 21 was introduced on the first day of the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress, these organizations had built a coalition of 15 national Military and Veterans Service Organizations, and six retired Master Chief Petty Officers of the Coast Guard.

“The speedy passage of Senate Bill 21 will quickly alleviate potential hardships that can be placed on our Coast Guard members as a result of holding back their pay. This would also bring parity with our DoD colleagues as well,” says Vince Patton who is the 8<sup>th</sup> Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard (MCPOCG).

The CPOA was chartered on April 7, 1969, and formed to advance the interests of the United States Coast Guard Chief Petty Officer Corps, encouraging integrity and fidelity to the Service, and fellowship within our ranks. A non-partisan, not-for-profit organization, the CPOA serve as advocates on a variety of Military and Veterans issues. Representing their members on Capitol Hill as a partner of The Military Coalition which promotes legislation to enhance the lives of past, present and future members of the U.S. Armed Forces and their families.

The Coast Guard Enlisted Association (CGEA) is an Association of junior enlisted personnel, conceived of and administered by the USCG Chief Petty Officers Association (CPOA) formally approved by the CPOA Board of Directors on 16 August 1991. The missions of the CGEA include: Being prepared to support members and dependents in need; Assist the CPOA in their endeavors; Promote professional advancement through responsible leadership; Encourage involvement in personal growth; Support command policies and functions; And to be active in community affairs and aid those in need.

The Sea Service Family, Foundation was established on March 15, 2015, to honor the children of Navy Provisional Detainee Battalion 5 and Task Group Trident 5 Bravo, who lost their parents to suicide, by providing college scholarships in their parent’s names. On February 28, 2018, SSFF increased its mission to help build coalitions between smaller Military and Veteran Organizations, to give them a voice, when it came to issues they were being affected by in the Federal Government. SSFF has effectively guided change by advocating for legislation in the House and Senate, sitting on the advisory panel at the Defense Health Agency, meeting with the Secretary of Labor, Veterans Affairs, and Defense, and recently worked with a law firm to help defend a case before the US Supreme Court. SSFF is a member of the National Military Veterans Alliance.

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