

**Oral Testimony of Master Chief Michael Leavitt  
Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard**

**“USCG FY 2013 Budget”**

**Before the House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Coast  
Guard and Maritime Transportation**

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Subcommittee. It is a privilege to appear before you today, and it is also an honor to represent the hard working Coast Guard men and women serving our Nation, both here in the United States and around the world.

I continue to be humbled and amazed by the sacrifice, dedication, and commitment I see every day by our Coast Guardsmen and for the unwavering support they receive from their families and loved ones, which allows us to better serve our Nation to the fullest extent.

Our dedicated Coast Guard men and women are working hard every day to protect our Nation’s interests. We are overseas, we are on the high seas, we are on our Nation’s waters, we are in our Nation’s ports and waterways, manning our operations centers and working with local agencies and industry so we can help keep our Nation secure. Right now, our brave Coast Guardsmen are out in the maritime environment, saving lives, protecting property, conducting law enforcement, setting and working buoys, breaking ice, and so much more. I couldn’t be more proud of the men and women in the Coast Guard for the outstanding job they do every day.

For example, just recently the icebreaker, Coast Guard Cutter HEALY, completed a grueling 254-day deployment where she and her crew successfully supported important scientific research in the Arctic. But as you know, the HEALY was diverted very late in her deployment to escort the Russian-flagged tanker vessel Renda along an 800-mile journey to deliver fuel to the people of Nome, AK. As the Nation watched, the Coast Guard Cutter HEALY fought through severe storms and freezing temperatures to successfully escort the Tanker Renda through the ice for a first-ever winter time fuel delivery by sea.

Thank you for your continued support to replace our aging assets with new cutters, aircraft, and boats. As the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard, it is my responsibility to look out for our workforce and their families’ well-being. The assets requested in our budget will provide our people with highly capable, safer and more efficient and effective platforms. Not only do these new assets meet our most urgent

operational requirements, they also help to greatly improve the quality of life and safety of the men and women that serve aboard and operate them.

As you have heard before, the material condition of our aging Cutter fleet is unacceptable. These ships were built over 40 years ago--the berthing areas are cramped with up to 20 people sharing a common area and sanitary facilities. In fact, I served on CGC BOUTWELL, a high endurance cutter almost 30 years ago and she was not a new ship then! The mechanical systems require crews to spend countless hours repairing equipment to keep the ship running and this results in lost training opportunities and a decrease in operational proficiency and this negatively impacts the crews morale. We owe them better. As the Commandant stated, we are now delivering and operating National Security Cutters to replace the aging High Endurance Cutter fleet. I can tell you that the crews on these new ships are very excited to operate these new highly capable platforms.

Last year in my testimony I mentioned some of the challenges our men and women and their families face, particularly with regards to housing and child care. On behalf of our service members, I am truly grateful for the housing and child care enhancements made possible in the Fiscal Year 2012 budget. Because of your support, we are making great strides toward enhancing these programs and bridging the parity gap with the Department of Defense.

I've visited multiple Coast Guard units during this past year and have heard the concerns of our members and their families. Ensuring adequate housing for our Coast Guard members living in high cost of living areas is a high priority for the Commandant and me. Fiscal stewardship is also a high priority, and as such, we are currently in the process of assessing our housing inventory across the Nation, including Alaska, Hawaii and Puerto Rico. In this constrained fiscal environment, we need to be very smart on how and where we spend our maintenance and recapitalization funding to sustain front-line operations and best support our members and their families.

On behalf of the men and women of the United States Coast Guard, I thank you for your continued support of our military members, their families and loved ones. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to recognize the great work our Coast Guardsmen perform everyday as well as the sacrifices they endure.

Thank you for allowing me to testify here today and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.