

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 10, 2010

Senator Daniel Inouye  
Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations  
Room S-128  
The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Thad Cochran  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Appropriations  
Room S-146A  
The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Robert Byrd  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Homeland Security  
135 Dirksen Senate Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Senator George Voinovich  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Homeland  
Security  
125 Hart Senate Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Inouye, Chairman Byrd, Ranking Member Cochran, and Ranking Member Voinovich:

We are writing in strong opposition to the proposed budget cuts to the Coast Guard's multi-mission Maritime Safety and Security Teams (MSST). As you know the President's proposed FY 2011 budget would eliminate five of the twelve MSSTs and disburse their assets into the remaining seven teams. These units were created as a direct response to 9/11 to meet a shortfall in capability in maritime security and are part of the Coast Guard's Deployable Operations Group. They provide enhanced port safety and security and law enforcement capabilities to the port where they are based, and are designed to be deployed, many times on an as needed basis, anywhere in the country within 12 hours.

The MSSTs capabilities include maritime interdiction and law enforcement, anti-terrorism and force protection of U.S. and allied force load-outs, and the detection of weapons of mass destruction and explosives. They also enforce moving and fixed security zones, defend critical waterside facilities in strategic ports, and provide a modest level of shore-side force protection. These MSSTs have also deployed in support of National Special Security Events (NSSE) requiring Coast Guard presence, such as the Super Bowl, the Democratic and Republican National Conventions, OpSail, the Olympics, and major disasters or storm recovery operations.

Given the critical missions that MSSTs perform we were surprised that the President's budget would target the MSSTs in St Marys, GA; New York, NY; New Orleans, LA; San Francisco, CA; and Anchorage, AK. The decision to eliminate these MSSTs does not make sense from a strategic or budgetary perspective and we strongly urge you include funding in the FY 2011 Homeland Security Appropriations Act for these five teams. The decommissioning of these units will lead to a reduced security presence on our shores, and now is not the time for reductions in our security resources.

We appreciate your prompt attention to this issue, and stand ready to assist you in any way. Should you or your staff have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us or our staff.

Sincerely,

Sally Chaublin

Kirsten E. Hillibrand

Mark Begeh

Chuck Sch

[Signature]

Mary Landrum

Daniel Vitter

Joe Neuhouser

Barbara Byrd