

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
AND INFRASTRUCTURE

CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE COAST
GUARD AND MARITIME TRANSPORTATION



Duncan Hunter
U.S. House of Representatives
50th District, California
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President Donald J. Trump
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President :

Your address yesterday at the Coast Guard Academy commencement in New London, Connecticut, was not only well-received by cadets and their families, but also among myself, as Chairman of the House subcommittee with oversight of the Coast Guard, and others in Congress. I especially appreciated your commitment to invest in the future of the Coast Guard and direct the focus of your administration to construct at least six polar icebreakers.

To ensure you meet this objective and do it in a manner that is cost-effective and less time-consuming, I have a recommendation for you and your team.

As you are aware, the cost of a single heavy icebreaker is estimated at approximately \$1 billion. Understanding the budget challenges facing the Coast Guard, and the so far inadequate commitment of Congressional appropriators despite an allocation of \$150 billion to begin icebreaker construction, I have continued to consult with industry experts and others, including the Navy, on issues ranging from capacity to opportunities for program support.

It is a fact that too many opportunities to accelerate icebreaker construction and acquisition have been missed, but I am confident that with your leadership, this *can* and *will* change.

The Navy is the premier expert in ship construction. In recognition of this fact, I initially consulted with the now acting Navy Secretary, and encouraged the creation of an Integrated Program Office (IPO) with the Coast Guard for icebreaker design and construction in order to provide the Coast Guard with the best practices and experiences of the Navy. The IPO is now active.

It is no fault of the Coast Guard, but the service simply does to retain the experience or knowledge-base for such a major acquisition. With the Navy's help, in both the short and long-term, the Coast Guard will be better positioned to bring online more ships in even shorter time. This is not only a direct benefit to the Coast Guard and the national interest, it's a benefit to taxpayers—especially if the Coast Guard follows the Navy's lead and adheres to a block buy concept.

This will translate into savings of hundreds of millions of dollars and also accelerate construction. The Navy has even done this on lead vessels, and its versatility and record of success underscores the value of this approach.

A block buy on heavy icebreakers in any quantity would allow for other advanced procurement opportunities, to include securing lead materials. With your level of business experience, I know you recognize the value of this.

Any further request or commitment for icebreaker funding should coincide with an approach that utilizes funding as a down payment for the construction of multiple vessels, rather a single vessel that will require years to build. Under the current funding approach favored by Congressional appropriators and a few others in your administration, I can say with absolute confidence that your goal to build the required number of icebreakers under your leadership will go unfulfilled.

The Coast Guard currently holds this authority, but to ensure there is no further confusion, a provision will be included in the Coast Guard reauthorization measure soon under consideration to supply full block buy authority for all major Coast Guard acquisitions. This is legislation that will most certainly be presented to you for your signature.

I also want to emphasize that in my conversations with the Navy, the recommendation has been made that the Coast Guard should leverage existing assets through lease agreements to fill the gap in icebreaker capability that currently exists and will continue to exist even after the first heavy icebreaker is delivered. This is true even for the second and third heavy icebreaker, based on the reality that Russia alone is operating approximately 40 vessels with even more in the design and construction phase. And we are both well aware that until we deploy these vessels in the Arctic, Russia will continue to hold its advantage and outpace the U.S. to the detriment of U.S. national security and commercial and research interests.

Mr. President, I am concerned that the entire icebreaker acquisition endeavor has been made more complicated than need be—and your leadership can make all the difference.

Sincerely,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in blue ink, likely belonging to Duncan Hunter, is written over the printed name and title.

Duncan Hunter
Member of Congress

Cc: Director Mick Mulvaney