



Homeland
Security

December 19, 2014

The Honorable Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Merkley:

I am responding to your November 18, 2014 letter regarding the scheduled closure of the United States Coast Guard Air Facilities in Newport, Oregon and Charleston, South Carolina. The concerns you raised within your letter resulted in the provision added to the *2015 Coast Guard Authorization Act* prohibiting the Department from closing these Air Facilities.

The Department will certainly comply with the enacted law and there will be no break in services at the Air Facilities. I want to note that this comes at a cost to other higher priority Coast Guard operations since corresponding funding for continued operation of these facilities was not restored. This unfunded mandate impacts mission performance and degrades the overall effectiveness of the Search and Rescue system of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). I urge you to restore the funding required to operate these Air Facilities (\$12 million annually, including 55 full-time equivalents) so that operations, assets, and personnel are not reduced elsewhere to address this funding gap.

The challenging fiscal environment—and good governance—requires that I continue to push the Coast Guard, the other DHS Operating Components, and the rest of the Department to examine ways to ensure our highest priority missions are funded and that unwanted redundancies across the Department are identified and addressed accordingly. I owe this to the Department, to our Congressional oversight, but most importantly to the American people who expect us to be good stewards of the budget that Congress provides.

The Honorable Jeffrey A. Merkley

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I appreciate your continued support for DHS and the Coast Guard. The co-signers of your letter will receive separate, identical responses. Should you wish to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Jeh Charles Johnson". The signature is highly stylized and somewhat illegible due to its cursive and overlapping nature.

Jeh Charles Johnson

Enclosures