

Kevin Greenwood

From: Gauthier, Katie (Merkley) <Katie_Gauthier@merkley.senate.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, December 10, 2014 4:31 PM
To: Gauthier, Katie (Merkley)
Subject: FW: Oregon Lawmakers Secure Provision to Keep Newport Coast Guard Air Facility Open until January 2016

Wanted to share the good news with you.

News Release

U.S. Congress



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Oregon Lawmakers Secure Provision to Keep Newport Coast Guard Air Facility Open until January 2016

Life-Saving Rescue Helicopters Had Been Scheduled for Removal by Dec. 15

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Following their repeated calls to ensure the safety of residents in coastal areas, Oregon Senators Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley and Representatives Peter DeFazio, Kurt Schrader, Earl Blumenauer and Suzanne Bonamici today announced the Congress has passed legislation that will keep the U.S. Coast Guard’s air facility at Newport open through the coming year.

The Oregon lawmakers worked to include language in the Coast Guard reauthorization bill that would keep the Coast Guard’s air stations open through January 1, 2016—including the Newport facility. The Senate passed the short-term Coast Guard reauthorization bill earlier today, and the House of Representatives passed it tonight.

“This bill buys us some much-needed time to keep fighting for Newport, for the air facility and for the continued safety of residents living and working along the Oregon coast,” Wyden said. **“I will continue working with my Oregon colleagues to pursue every avenue to keep this facility in Newport.”**

“The passage of this bill is a literal lifesaver for our coastal communities,” Merkley said. **“It’s essential to the safety of fishermen, recreational boaters, and tourists on our coast that we have lifesaving facilities nearby when the distress call comes. This is a huge win for the safety of our communities and the health of our economy. I’m determined to keep the Newport helicopter right where it belongs: in Newport.”**

“It is impossible to understate how critical this air station is not only to the hardworking men and women of Oregon’s fishing industry, but for all coastal visitors and residents,” DeFazio said. **“While I’m**

encouraged that the Oregon delegation was able to keep the lights on for one more year in Newport, clearly we will need to keep up the fight in the coming months in order to ensure a permanent resolution.”

“I know folks often get frustrated with Washington, DC for not getting things done that matter to them,” Schrader said. **“But this critical safety issue on our coast is an example of how a community, working with its elected officials can really make a difference, just like we did with NOAA and get something done. I’m proud to be on a team with my colleagues in the House and Senate to make sure this helicopter remains in Newport.”**

“The Newport Coast Guard Air Facility is critical to the safety and security of a key region of Oregon’s coastal economy,” Blumenauer said. **“Closing this facility will harm Oregon’s tourism, research, and fishing industries and create longer response times in life or death situations.”**

“Without this helicopter, far too many Oregonians who earn a living on our coast or enjoy its beautiful beaches would be at risk,” Bonamici said. **“I’m glad to see that the air facility and its helicopter will remain in Newport for the next year, and I will continue to work with my colleagues on a permanent solution.”**

[In a letter last month](#), the Oregon lawmakers, along with South Carolina Senators Tim Scott, R-S.C. and Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., and Representatives Mark Sanford, R-S.C., and Tom Rice, R-S.C., and Duncan Hunter, R-Calif., urged the Department of Homeland Security to reverse the Coast Guard’s decision. This letter came on the heels of a letter that Oregon lawmakers sent to the Commandant of the Coast Guard urging him to keep the helicopter in Newport.

While the Coast Guard claims that it would still be able to meet the national standard of a two-hour search-and-rescue response time, local fishermen and Central Coast residents who depend on the rescue helicopters say first-hand experience shows that closure of the base will lengthen response times and threaten the safety of local mariners.

Newport houses National Oceanic and Atmospheric vessels and Oregon’s largest commercial fishing fleet, in addition to research vessels from Oregon State University. In response to repeated calls from Oregon lawmakers, the Coast Guard announced it would delay the December 1 closure of the Newport facility until December 15.

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