

June 27, 2006 - Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Act of 2006 " Conference Report

Statement by the Honorable Loretta Sanchez

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Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Act of 2006. This legislation provides critical authorization to ensure that the Coast Guard has the resources and authority to achieve its many missions. The Coast Guard makes numerous contributions that affect the safety and security of the United States with its traditional mission including: disaster response; port, waterways and coastal security; recreational boater safety; search and rescue; illegal drug and migrant interdiction; aids to navigation, and the protection of natural resources. In addition, over the last couple years the Coast Guard has taken on expanded homeland security missions as it works to secure our nation's ports, ships, and cargo.

I believe that the Coast Guard must have appropriate authorization to complete its diverse mission. I am particularly pleased that among other important authorizing language, the Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Act of 2006 conference report includes two provisions that I have worked on extensively. The conference report mandates a pilot program to demonstrate long-range vessel tracking systems.

This program will work in conjunction with an existing non-profit maritime organization that has a demonstrated history in operating satellite communications systems to transmit this type of data. An example of such a system is the Maritime Information Service of North America's (MISNA) Automated Secure Vessel Tracking System (ASVTS), which currently operates near my district at the ports of Los Angeles/Long Beach and 49 other sites around the United States. ASVTS provides worldwide tracking to ensure that vessels follow their itineraries and helps better coordinate the arrival of vessels at ports. I am hopeful that the Coast Guard will use MISNA and ASVTS to assist in conducting the pilot program mandated in this conference report.

I am also particularly pleased that an amendment I successfully added to the House bill to require a review of Coast Guard active-duty personnel to ensure it is able to carry out its many and diverse missions. As the Coast Guard is tasked with additional responsibilities, we must make sure they have enough personnel to address each mission and maintain the high quality work for which the Coast Guard is known.

I am pleased that these provisions, among many others in this bill, will soon become law. I urge my colleagues to support this important bill and I yield back the balance of my time. Thank You.