Coast Guard Announces ‘Chief Petty Officer Class’ for New Waterways Commerce Cutters

Release From U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Coast Guard announced today that its new fleet of Waterways Commerce Cutters (WCC) will be designated as the “Chief Petty Officer Class.” Each cutter will be named in honor of a Coast Guard Chief Petty Officer, recognizing the profound impact and legacy of these leaders within the Service.

These cutters will replace the Coast Guard’s aging river tender fleet, facilitating the safe, secure and reliable flow of commerce throughout the nation’s Marine Transportation System (MTS). With America’s MTS supporting $5.4 trillion of economic activity, the WCCs will maintain aids to navigation that enable safe movement of food, energy, consumer goods, and raw materials between producers and consumers. Through their stewardship of the MTS, including our vital system of aids to navigation, the WCC fleet will play a critical role in advancing America’s economic security and protecting vital ports and waterways.

The Coast Guard has received initial approval to produce the first eight WCCs, supported by historic investments made possible through President Trump’s One Big Beautiful Bill Act. The legislation provides nearly $25 billion – the largest single funding commitment in Coast Guard history – including $162 million to accelerate production rates and deliver three cutters ahead of schedule. These modernization efforts are aligned with Force Design 2028, a blueprint introduced by Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem to transform the Coast Guard into a more agile, capable and responsive

force.

The announcement comes on National Lighthouse Day, underscoring the Service's long-standing role in safeguarding maritime commerce and navigation. Since 1789, Coast Guard missions have been linked to protecting safe passage across America's waterways, a legacy that continues today with the WCC fleet.

"Since 1920, Chief Petty Officers and the Chiefs Mess have driven Coast Guard readiness and operational excellence," said Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard Phillip Waldron. "These new cutters and their crews will build on that legacy, ensuring maritime commerce flows safely and we continue to control, secure and defend our inland ports and waterways and Marine Transportation System."

The Coast Guard maintains nearly 45,000 navigational aids nationwide. This new class of cutters – supported by historic recapitalization efforts and guided by Force Design 2028 – will be instrumental in continuing these vital operations, ensuring safe and efficient waterways and a stronger, more ready and capable Coast Guard for generations to come.