

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

TESTIMONY OF

REAR ADMIRAL EDWIN DANIELS, U.S. COAST GUARD

IN SUPPORT OF AMENDMENT OF 31 U.S.C. 241

FOR PRESENTATION TO

SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE FOR AGENCY ADMINISTRATION

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

19 OCTOBER 1981

THE COAST GUARD WHOLEHEARTEDLY SUPPORTS THE LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL TO INCREASE THE MAXIMUM PAYMENT UNDER THE MILITARY PERSONNEL AND CIVILIAN EMPLOYEES CLAIMS ACT OF 1964 FROM \$15,000 TO \$25,000. WE BELIEVE THIS INCREASE IS NECESSARY TO PROVIDE THE ADEQUATE LEVEL OF PROTECTION FOR OUR PEOPLE CONTEMPLATED BY THE STATUTE.

AS YOU KNOW, THE PURPOSE OF THE MILITARY PERSONNEL AND CIVILIAN EMPLOYEES' CLAIMS ACT IS TO PROVIDE A BASIC MEASURE OF COMPENSATION FOR PERSONAL PROPERTY LOST OR DAMAGED INCIDENT TO THE SERVICE OF MILITARY PERSONNEL AND FEDERAL CIVILIAN EMPLOYEES. THE PROPOSED INCREASE TO \$25,000 MERELY CORRECTS FOR INFLATION THE \$15,000 MAXIMUM ESTABLISHED IN 1974.

DAMAGES OF THIS MAGNITUDE ARE MOST LIKELY TO OCCUR WHEN A MEMBER'S PERSONAL BELONGINGS AND HOUSEHOLD GOODS ARE SUBSTANTIALLY OR TOTALLY LOST EITHER IN GOVERNMENT PROVIDED QUARTERS OR WHILE BEING SHIPPED INCIDENT TO A CHANGE IN DUTY ASSIGNMENT. THE PERSONAL LOSS TO THE MEMBER AND HIS FAMILY IS ENERVATING EVEN WHEN REPLACEMENT IS POSSIBLE; THE LOSS BECOMES CATASTROPHIC WHEN THE MEMBER CANNOT RECOVER THE TOTAL PECUNIARY VALUE OF HIS POSSESSIONS. -/ *Factually, a member's personal property is often lost or damaged while in government quarters.*

WHILE THE ACTUAL NUMBER OF COAST GUARD CLAIMS WHICH WOULD HAVE BEEN PAID IN AMOUNTS GREATER THAN \$15,000 IS VERY FEW, THE EFFECT OF THAT LIMITATION ON THOSE COAST GUARD CLAIMANTS HAS BEEN SEVERE. THE AMOUNT OF ADDITIONAL FUNDS REQUIRED TO INCREASE THEIR RECOVERY TO A MAXIMUM OF \$25,000 IS SMALL ESPECIALLY WHEN MEASURED AGAINST THE RELIEF THE INCREASED

RECOVERY WOULD HAVE AFFORDED THESE CLAIMANTS. THE FIGURE BECOMES INSIGNIF-
ICANT WHEN IT, IN EFFECT, REPRESENTS THE AMOUNT NEEDED TO EXTEND THIS ADDED
PROTECTION TO ALL COAST GUARD PERSONNEL.

THE BENEFITS TO THE MEMBERS -- AND THE SERVICE -- WHICH WOULD RESULT
FROM THIS PROPOSAL WOULD TRULY BE A BARGAIN FOR THE SMALL ADDITIONAL COST
INVOLVED.