



TESTIMONY OF
COMMODORE CHRIS LAGEN
NATIONAL COMMODORE
U. S. COAST GUARD AUXILIARY
BEFORE THE
MERCHANT MARINE SUB-COMMITTEE
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON
COMMERCE, SCIENCE AND TRANSPORTATION
U. S. SENATE
MAY 13, 1986

GOOD MORNING MR. CHAIRMAN, MEMBERS OF THE SENATE MERCHANT MARINE
SUB-COMMITTEE. I'M COMMODORE CHRIS LAGEN, NATIONAL COMMODORE OF THE COAST
GUARD AUXILIARY. IN PRIVATE LIFE I'M IN THE REAL ESTATE BUSINESS IN CHICAGO.

I GREATLY APPRECIATE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO APPEAR BEFORE YOU ON BEHALF OF THE
COAST GUARD AUXILIARY, AN ALL VOLUNTEER FORCE OF RECREATIONAL BOATERS
DEDICATED TO PROMOTING SAFE BOATING.

THE AUXILIARY IS OFTEN DESCRIBED AS THE COAST GUARD'S MOST VALUABLE ASSET IN
THE CAMPAIGN TO REDUCE BOATING FATALITIES. CHARTERED IN 1939, THE AUXILIARY
IS THE ONLY BOATING ORGANIZATION WITH SUCH OFFICIAL ORIGIN AND CHARTER.

AS A MEMBER OF THE COAST GUARD FAMILY FOR 46 YEARS, THIS DEDICATED
ORGANIZATION OF VOLUNTEER MEN AND WOMEN HAS DISTINGUISHED ITSELF IN BOTH WAR
AND PEACE.

NOW, WHILE WE WOULD LIKE TO SAY THAT OUR BOATING ACCIDENT PREVENTION EFFORTS
HAVE SOLVED ALL THE PROBLEMS, IT IS JUST NOT SO. EVERY BOATER DOES NOT TAKE
ADVANTAGE OF OUR PROGRAMS.

FOR THIS REASON, THE AUXILIARY IS PROUD OF ITS ABILITY TO OFFER PROFICIENT AND
COST-EFFECTIVE VOLUNTEER SERVICE ASSISTING THE COAST GUARD IN SEARCH AND
RESCUE ACTIVITIES. AUXILIARISTS UNDERGO COMPREHENSIVE TRAINING TO SUPPORT
THIS CAPACITY.

FOR EXAMPLE, THE DOCUMENT YOU SEE BEFORE ME HERE TODAY IS THE AUXILIARY BOAT CREW MANUAL. IT IS THE PRIMARY REFERENCE TEXT IN THE COAST GUARD'S BOAT CREW QUALIFICATION PROGRAM FOR AUXILIARISTS, AND CLOSELY PARALLELS THE PROGRAM USED BY THE COAST GUARD TO QUALIFY ITS REGULAR AND RESERVE PERSONNEL IN SEARCH AND RESCUE SEAMANSHIP.

UNDER THIS PROGRAM, INITIATED IN 1984, THE COAST GUARD REQUIRES ALL AUXILIARISTS TO DEMONSTRATE PROFICIENCY IN SMALL BOAT HANDLING, SEAMANSHIP, SEARCH AND RESCUE, AND COMMUNICATIONS. THEY MUST MEET THESE RIGOROUS STANDARDS SET BY THE COAST GUARD IN ORDER TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR PARTICIPATION, AT COAST GUARD DIRECTION, IN SEARCH AND RESCUE ACTIVITIES. IN ADDITION, AUXILIARISTS MUST EQUIP THEIR VESSELS AT THEIR OWN EXPENSE TO MEET SPECIFIC COAST GUARD CRITERIA PRIOR TO HAVING THE VESSEL ACCEPTED AS AN OPERATIONAL FACILITY FOR USE UNDER COAST GUARD ORDERS.

MOST AUXILIARISTS ENTHUSIASTICALLY SUPPORT THE BOAT CREW QUALIFICATION PROGRAM, AND FEEL THE PERSONAL TIME AND RESOURCES SPENT IN TRAINING AND QUALIFYING ARE APPRECIATED BY THE COAST GUARD FOR THE ADDED OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY AFFORDED.

THE AUXILIARY UNDERSTANDS THE COAST GUARD'S POLICY NOT TO INTERFERE WITH PRIVATE ENTERPRISE EXCEPT IN UNUSUAL CIRCUMSTANCES --- OR WHERE NECESSARY TO PREVENT LOSS OF LIFE OR PROPERTY. BUT AUXILIARISTS ARE NOT IN COMPETITION WITH PRIVATE ENTERPRISE IN RENDERING ASSISTANCE TO FELLOW RECREATIONAL BOATERS. AUXILIARISTS RECEIVE NO PAY AND ARE ONLY SOMETIMES REIMBURSED FOR THE ACTUAL FUEL USED. THE AUXILIARY HAS LONG BEEN CONSIDERED "THE BOATER'S FRIEND," --- A POSITION MEMBERS ENJOY.

AS VOLUNTEERS, ALL THAT AUXILIARISTS ASK IS THAT THEIR SERVICES BE UTILIZED TO THE FULLEST POTENTIAL. AS RECREATIONAL BOATERS AND CONCERNED CITIZENS, THEY BELIEVE IT IS THEIR MARINER'S OBLIGATION TO ASSIST OTHER RECREATIONAL BOATERS. IN VIEW OF THIS, I FEEL THAT THE AUXILIARY SHOULD BE EXEMPT FROM CURRENT COAST GUARD POLICY REGARDING NON-EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE.

THANK YOU FOR LISTENING TO ME. AND NOW, IF THERE ARE ANY QUESTIONS, I WILL BE MOST HAPPY TO TRY AND ANSWER THEM.