

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 2, 2010

The Honorable David Price
Chairman
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
House Committee on Appropriations
H-218
U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Harold Rogers
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
House Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Price and Ranking Member Rogers:

We were recently informed that the United States Coast Guard's Fiscal Year 2011 budget proposal recommends closing the Coast Guard air facility located in Muskegon, Michigan and we urge you to reject that proposal.

In 1997, the Coast Guard located the air facility at the Muskegon County airport. The Coast Guard based its decision to locate the facility in Muskegon on a merit-based evaluation, and the facility has served both the community and boaters in southern Lake Michigan admirably. A five-year lease was later signed by the Coast Guard in 2005 with Muskegon County after they constructed a \$1.5 million permanent new hanger facility at the Muskegon County airport for operations in future years.

As such both the Coast Guard and the county of Muskegon have invested significant time and resources in coordinating efforts to operate the helicopter during the boating season. A decision to change the location of the facility now would mean that the resources invested in it would not be fully utilized.

With more than 800,000 registered recreational boaters in Michigan, we also need to ensure that our Great Lakes are well-served by the Coast Guard. From 2004 -2009 helicopters attached to the Muskegon Coast Guard air facility during the summer season directly contributed to operations resulting in six lives saved and 21 lives assisted, and it is our belief that this record of expedient public safety service be maintained.

The Department of Homeland Security and the United States Coast Guard should be confident that they correctly decided to locate a seasonal air facility station in Muskegon, Michigan. Boaters in southern Lake Michigan will continue to enjoy the premium level of search-and-rescue coverage that they have enjoyed during past boating seasons.

Sincerely,

fit Haeberle Sam Russell

John W. Frank York

Vernon J. Ehlers W. E. Schauer