

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
Washington, DC 20515

July 18, 2025

The Honorable Kristi Noem  
Secretary of Homeland Security  
2707 Martin Luther King Jr Ave SE, MS 0525  
Washington, DC 20528-0525

Dear Secretary Noem,

Thank you for all that you are doing to support our nation's Coast Guard (USCG) and your support of its incredible work keeping Florida families and our country safe. As demand on our Coast Guard rises and vessels age, there is an increasing need for new ships to support the USCG's mission.

It's why we write to you as members of the Florida Congressional Delegation to express our strong support for the continued construction and completion of the USCG's Offshore Patrol Cutter (OPC) program Stage 1 (ships 1-4) at Eastern Shipbuilding Group (Eastern) in Panama City, Florida. During congressional hearings in March and June 2025, both the (acting) Commandant and Vice Commandant of the Coast Guard testified that the Offshore Patrol Cutter (OPC) is one of the service's top acquisition priorities and that getting these assets quickly to the fleet was a national priority.

We were also encouraged to see President Trump's executive order titled, "Restoring America's Maritime Dominance." This executive order showed his bold leadership and reinforced the administration's commitment to revitalizing American shipbuilding by prioritizing domestic production, strengthening the U.S. industrial base, and ensuring that federally funded maritime projects support American workers and shipyards.

Eastern Shipbuilding Group has invested significantly in infrastructure, workforce development, and quality assurance to meet the Coast Guard's rigorous requirements. The company employs thousands of skilled workers and supports a robust supply chain across the region, making the OPC program not only a national security imperative, but also a crucial driver of Florida's economy.

The OPC program is vital to modernizing the USCG's aging medium endurance cutter fleet and to ensuring the service has the tools it needs to fulfill its broad mission set—ranging from maritime law enforcement and drug interdiction to search and rescue and national defense. Eastern has proven itself to be a capable and committed partner, progressing to 82% completion of USCGC Argus, despite the extraordinary challenges posed and the continual work through

Hurricane Michael, the COVID-19 pandemic, workforce challenges, and supply chain disruptions.

It is crucial we keep investing in resources to rebuild our maritime dominance in America versus relying on foreign-held entities who may not have the same America-first mindset. Florida is the proud home to Eastern, a domestically owned and operated shipyard, while the majority of the USCG's maritime recapitalization efforts have been awarded to foreign-held entities. Considering this need and following the EO, which helps local economies and creates jobs in communities where the shipbuilding is housed, we were disappointed to see Florida miss out on this opportunity due to the recent cancellation of two OPC contracts based in the state.

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Moving, disrupting, or continuing to pause the current production line introduces unnecessary risk, increases costs, and delays delivery of these urgently needed vessels – it also is wholly antithetical to the President's direction and intent. Eastern's performance and recovery efforts demonstrate its readiness and resilience. The USCG, and by extension the American people, would benefit from maintaining continuity and leveraging Eastern's proven capability. Together, as a delegation, we ask you reconsider and allow Eastern Shipbuilding Group to complete OPC's 1-4 and by immediately addressing the funding and payment issues that have added costly delays. We stand ready to assist in ensuring this program remains a success for our national security, our USCG, and our economy.

We are officially requesting a meeting between Mr. Sean Plankey and members of the Florida delegation in the next 30 calendar days to discuss the status and strategic importance of the OPC contract. Given Florida's vital role in the nation's maritime industry and the economic impact of the OPC program on the region, this conversation will provide an opportunity to align on key priorities and reinforce the mutual commitment to supporting the USCG's long-term operational requirements.

Thank you again for all that you are doing for our country and in support of our Coast Guard, and for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Neal P. Dunn, M.D.  
Member of Congress



Jimmy Patronis  
Member of Congress



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Ashley Moody  
United States Senator



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Vern Buchanan  
Member of Congress



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Rick Scott  
United States Senator