

H.R. 6905
“The Coast Guard Academy Improvement Act”

Section by Section Summary

As introduced on September 26, 2018
by
Representative Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)

Sec. 1. SHORT TITLE. The “Coast Guard Academy Improvement Act.”

TITLE I. ENHANCING CULTURAL COMPETENCE WITHIN THE COAST GUARD ACADEMY REFORM.

SEC. 101. ACTIVITIES TO FOSTER GREATER CULTURAL COMPETENCE WITHIN THE U.S. COAST GUARD ACADEMY.

This section directs the Secretary of Homeland Security to establish a commission within 30 days of enactment to assess the level of cultural competence within the Academy and, as appropriate, issue recommendations to foster greater cultural competence within the Academy.

- The Commission would issue recommendations on enhancing cultural competence by changing the qualifications required of officers, faculty, and staff assigned to the Academy as well as modifying institutional practices, policies, and structures.
- Based on its findings, the Commission will advise the Secretary, Commandant, and Academy Superintendent on a plan to implement these recommendations.
- The definition of “culture competence” will be the capacity of an individual or organization to works effectively in cross-cultural situations with individuals who are of a different race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or geographic origin, in a manner that values and understands diversity and to act to prevent and respond to social injustice and inequity.
- The Commission will be comprised of 11 appointed members. Two members will be officials from the Department of Homeland Security; three will be from the Coast Guard as designated by the Commandant; and the remaining six will be individuals from outside of the government as selected by the Secretary based on recommendations from Congress.
- The Commission will be required to meet within 90 days of being formed, elect a chair and vice chair, and hold no less than three public meetings. One of these public meetings must be held at the Coast Guard Academy.
- Based on these meetings, the Commission will submit a report with findings and recommendations to the Secretary no later than 180 days after its first meeting.

- Within 90 days of receiving this report, the Secretary will submit a copy of the Commission’s report to designated Congressional oversight committees along with feedback and implementation with related milestones.
- The Commission will remain active for in an advisory role for an additional year after issuance of the report to monitor implementation and make additional recommendations as necessary.

This section also requires the Department of Homeland Security, in consultation with the Coast Guard, to improve recruitment and retention efforts with in the Coast Guard Academy to ensure a more diverse candidate pool, student body, faculty, and staff based on race, ethnicity, gender, and geographic origin.

- A plan to improve recruitment and retention efforts must be issued within one year of enactment of this act and must address ways to improve outreach; modify institutional practices, policies, and structures to foster diversity; and establish new safeguards to foster the retention of Academy cadets, faculty, and staff.
- The Commandant of the Coast Guard and the Academy’s Superintendent will be required to carry out this plan in consultation with the Department’s Chief Human Capital Officer and the Chair of the Commission established earlier in this section.
- Starting in 2021, the Commandant, in consultation with the Department’s Chief Human Capital Officer, will be required to report to the designated Congressional oversight committees on the progress of this plan on an annual basis through 2031.

Additionally, this section formally authorizes the Coast Guard Academy’s Minority Outreach Team (AMOT) and requires the Commandant, with input from the Superintendent, AMOT volunteers, and Academy alumni, to appoint a permanent civilian position at the Coast Guard to administer the program.

Lastly, this section requires a Government Accountability Office to review implementation of all of the activities authorized under this section no later than a year after issuance of the recruitment and retention plan. The review will include any recommendations to enhance recruitment, retention, and outcomes.

SEC. 102. HOMELAND SECURITY ROTATIONAL CYBERSECURITY RESEARCH PROGRAM AT THE COAST GUARD ACADEMY.

This section allows the Secretary to create a cybersecurity rotational research, development, and training program for Coast Guard Academy graduates and faculty to the Department’s National Protection and Programs Directorate (NPPD) and the Directorate of Science and Technology (S&T). Employees of both directorates will also be included in this program to be detailed to the Coast Guard Academy as faculty.

The intention of this program is to not only enhance the Department’s and Coast Guard’s cybersecurity capacity building efforts, but to also create new opportunities for academic and professional enrichment.

TITLE II. ENHANCING OPPORTUNITIES AT THE COAST GUARD ACADEMY

SEC. 201. ACADEMY NOMINATIONS.

This section allows each Member of Congress to nominate up to three qualified candidates to the U.S. Coast Guard Academy starting in academic year 2021.

- The Coast Guard Academy would be required to fill a quarter of slots in the incoming class of 2021 from the pool of qualified, geographically-diverse applicants received through the congressional nominations process.
- Each subsequent academic year, half of the slots in each incoming class would have to be filled through the congressional nominations process.
- The Coast Guard Academy is expected to use the same, existing selection criteria to choose the best candidates from the pool nominated by Members as for those candidates offered an opportunity to attend the Academy without a congressional nomination.

SEC. 202. THE COAST GUARD'S COLLEGE STUDENT PRE-COMMISSIONING INITIATIVE.

This section formally authorizes the Coast Guard's College Student Pre-Commissioning Initiative (CSPI), a program for eligible undergraduate students to enlist and receive a guaranteed commission as an officer in the United States Coast Guard.

- Using most of the eligibility criteria in place at the time of enactment, undergraduate sophomores and juniors of Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) would be eligible to apply.
- To expand the reach of CSPI, this section will also open the program to individual undergraduate sophomore and junior students who are underrepresented minorities pursuing degrees in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics at institutions of higher education that are not considered MSIs and HBCUs.
- The Commandant will be required to report to the designated Congressional oversight committees at the end of each academic year on outreach and recruitment effort, as well as participation data broken down by various demographics.