

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 11, 2025

ADM Kevin E. Lunday, USCG
Acting Commandant, U.S. Coast Guard
2703 Martin Luther King Jr Ave SE
Washington, DC 20593-7000

Dear Acting Commandant Lunday:

We write regarding our concerns with the First District Coastal Buoy Modernization Initiative and related efforts. Principally, we have reservations about how this would affect the safety of mariners throughout District One, the timeline the agency is proposing, and the sufficiency of the agency's communications with stakeholders of the proposed changes. We understand the need to modernize the Aids-to-Navigation (ATON) system, and we commend the agency for proactively initiating a program to assess current systems and to propose appropriate changes. However, we urge the agency to slow down this effort to ensure that the agency understands the needs of the communities and mariners in our states. Therefore, we urge you to extend the public comment period and increase public and Congressional engagement as outlined in this letter.

We understand that Global Navigation Satellite Systems (GNSS), Electronic Navigation Charts (ENC), Electronic Charting Systems (ECS), and smartphone navigation applications have changed many facets of navigation. However, prudent mariners continue to depend on non-electronic and traditional means of navigation, including charts and visual navigation aids like buoys and related ATON. Indeed, the agency's regulations on ATON acknowledge that "The Coast Guard maintains systems of marine aids to navigation consisting of visual, audible, and electronic signals which are designed to assist the prudent mariner in the process of navigation."

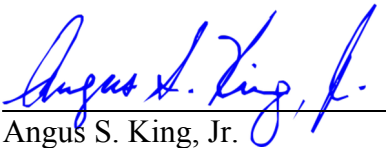
With respect to the First District Coastal Buoy Modernization Initiative, we are troubled that the current proposal would discontinue 916 buoys and beacons (309 Coastal and 607 Harbor buoys) in District One as soon as this year and into 2026. We appreciate the need to modernize, but the Coast Guard and other stakeholders need to maximize navigation safety utilizing all available means – electronic and visual. As you are well aware, mishaps continue to show the need for mariners to competently pilot their vessels, and effective coastal piloting relies on GPS, Radar, and visual navigational aids, including buoys, beacons, lights, ranges, and lighthouses.

Because the scope of the proposed effort is significant and will have a lasting impact, we request that the Coast Guard extend the comment period for public input on the District One initiative until September 1, 2025, undertake more extensive outreach, and enhance the compilation of data on which the agency is relying. Specifically, we request a dedicated public website on this initiative, an extension to the comment period, a briefing after the agency has winnowed its list of ATONs to discontinue, and a commitment to implement the District One ATON effort no earlier than October 1, 2026. The extension of the public comment period will allow the Coast

Guard to conduct outreach, enhance public comment via additional means other than a single email address (e.g., a dedicated website), and allow mariners to practically consider these changes during peak recreational and commercial seasons. Lastly, we are also seeking a delay in implementing the actual changes by approximately one year to allow for sufficient review and collaboration ahead of implementation.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and request a follow-up discussion with you regarding this matter by June 26th, 2025.

Sincerely,



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



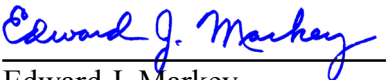
Susan M. Collins
United States Senator



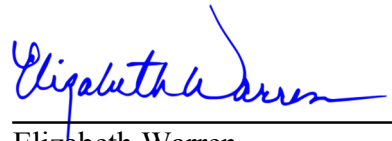
Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



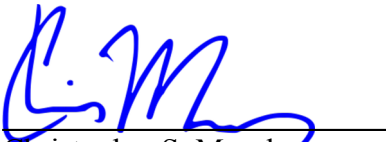
Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



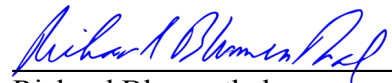
Edward J. Markey
United States Senator




Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator