

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 22, 2014

Admiral Paul F. Zukunft
Commandant
United States Coast Guard
2703 Martin Luther King, Jr. Ave., SE
Washington, DC 20593

Dear Admiral Zukunft:

We are requesting a six-month delay in the United States Coast Guard's (USCG) decision to close the Air Facility in Newport, Oregon. While we continue to believe that you should permanently reverse this decision per our letter of October 8—and while we will continue working to keep these assets in Newport—we urge you, at a minimum, to delay its implementation until after Newport's coming crabbing season.

Closing the USCG Air Facility in Newport on December 1, 2014, the first day of the commercial crabbing season, with only two months-notice of the final decision is unacceptable. Before any decision to remove the helicopter is finalized, the assumptions underlying the nationwide two-hour response standard need to be specifically evaluated for their effectiveness in these cold waters and treacherous terrain, as well as the impact the reduction in service will have on response by the remaining North Bend and Astoria Air Stations.

At a minimum, the lack of notice has harmed the ability of local emergency response services to prepare plans that do not rely on the USCG helicopter's presence in Newport. First-responders need the opportunity to evaluate what they will need to do to protect the public and what risk their operations run with the USCG helicopters stationed further away.

The community those first-responders support also relies on the proximity of the USCG helicopter in Newport. Commercial fisherman, steep terrain loggers, and recreationalists working in the treacherous waters and cliffs along the Oregon Coast have managed their risks with the knowledge that the USCG helicopter is stationed close by.

We value the vital work that the USCG performs on a daily basis and the support it provides our communities and neighbors working and living in dangerous conditions. We also reiterate our strong opposition to the USCG's decision to close the Newport Air Facility. Our goal remains keeping a USCG helicopter in Newport permanently and we hope that a delay will provide us an opportunity to continue working with the USCG to make that a reality.

Sincerely,



KURT SCHRADER
Member of Congress



RON WYDEN
U.S. Senator



JEFF MERKLEY
U.S. Senator



PETER DeFAZIO
Member of Congress



SUZANNE BONAMICI
Member of Congress



EARL BLUMENAUER
Member of Congress

cc: Secretary Jeh Johnson, Department of Homeland Security
Rear Admiral Richard T. Gromlich, Commander, Thirteenth Coast Guard District