

# U.S. Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2025 – New and Updated Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment (SASH) Prevention and Response Provisions

Among many provisions, the bipartisan Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2025 will establish or update numerous Coast Guard and Academy authorities and programs to improve reporting, oversight, prevention, and accountability related to sexual misconduct.

These provisions were signed into law in response to [Operation Fouled Anchor](#), which revealed gross mishandling of sexual assault and sexual harassment cases of U.S. Coast Guard personnel.

Here is a breakdown of key provisions:

## **Victim Support**

- **Addresses Expedited Transfers for Victims:** To ensure victims of sexual assault and domestic violence feel safe, particularly if they are experiencing retaliation, the law requires the Coast Guard to develop processes that are consistent with Department of Defense (DOD) policies for transferring members who are victims to a new unit. This includes requiring consideration of the victim's career path when determining the transfer location, and recusal of officials involved in the approval or denial of an expedited transfer who may have a conflict of interest. The law also establishes the opportunity for Coast Guard Academy cadets who are sexual assault victims to transfer to a DOD service academy, an option which students attending one of the DOD academies have had since 2020.
- **Strengthens Protective Orders for Victims:** Reforms the process for victims of domestic abuse or sex-related offenses to obtain protective orders prohibiting perpetrators from contacting or communicating with them. Previously, many victims were not aware of the process for obtaining an order and Coast Guard procedures placed a heavy burden on victims to renew the orders themselves every 90 days.
- **Establishes Confidential Reporting of Sexual Harassment:** Requires the Coast Guard to develop a process for members to report sexual harassment in a confidential manner. This will improve access to programs and services by providing more avenues for reporting sexual harassment and allow members a reporting option that the DOD services have had since 2021.

- **Expedites Victim Access to Records and Expands Records Retention:** In response to whistleblower concerns about lengthy delays in receiving case files, this law requires victims to receive expedited access to records associated with their reported assault. Additionally, this provision specifies what documents must be included and retained in case files and expands the retention timeframes to address the discovery from Operation Fouled Anchor that relevant documents and other evidence often were not retained.
- **Requires Door Locks on Coast Guard Academy Cadet Dorm Rooms:** Requires installation of electronic door locks on each dorm room at the Coast Guard Academy and requires the Coast Guard to maintain the identity of individuals who electronically access a cadet room. Unauthorized room entries were a factor in the majority of incident cases in Operation Fouled Anchor that occurred on campus. Allowing cadets to lock their doors has been recommended by victims and individuals in the Coast Guard for more than 25 years.
- **Overhauls Sexual Misconduct Training:** Requires new, specified sexual misconduct training content tailored to command leadership, first responders, and all Coast Guard members. This will ensure that members are educated about victim support resources and other programs that are modified in this law, including:
  - Expedited transfers
  - No-contact orders
  - Military and civilian protective orders
  - Temporary separation
  - Recommendations from the Accountability and Transparency Review that have been codified in law
- **Expands Victim Access to Medical Exams Upon Involuntary Separation:** Victims of sexual assault often suffer from behavioral health conditions such as anxiety, depression, or post-traumatic stress disorder that can manifest more than two years after an incident. This provision expands eligibility for medical exams for those facing an involuntary separation from two years to five years after a reported incident, and now includes any behavioral health condition listed in the DSM, rather than what is currently covered: traumatic brain injuries and PTSD.

### **Accountability and Oversight**

- **Institutes Accountability for Retired Offenders:** The law explicitly codifies the Coast Guard's authority to reconsider and reduce the rank of a retired commissioned officer, affecting their pension, if substantial evidence comes to light that the officer acted with disregard for relevant laws, committed sexual assault, or failed to report instances of sexual assault with an intent to defraud or deceive.

- Strengthens the Coast Guard Legal Program to Improve Oversight and Accountability, and Limit Interference:** Codifies the two most senior lawyers of the Coast Guard: the active duty Coast Guard Judge Advocate General (TJAG) and the senior executive service (career reserved) Deputy Judge Advocate General (DJAG). Requires strong qualifications including demonstrated legal experience, appointment procedures, duties, vacancy procedures, reporting structure and other requirements. Most importantly, the legislation protects the independence of the TJAG and DJAG, and other judge advocates from interference by other personnel, including Department of Homeland Security political personnel. The law would also establish a new O-6 staff judge advocate billet for the purposes of advising the Commandant on legal matters to improve leadership access to independent legal advice in direct response to Operation Fouled Anchor.
- Requires Sexual Misconduct to be Recorded in Personnel Service Records:** Requires information regarding substantiated sexual misconduct to be placed in personnel records of members and to be considered in civilian hiring. According to findings and recommendations in the Coast Guard's Culture of Respect Report, and underscored by whistleblowers, misconduct has not been appropriately considered in the past.
- Improves Security Clearance Oversight:** The law also requires the Coast Guard to improve oversight of security clearances for perpetrators. The law adds the Coast Guard to DOD's statutory requirements specifying that security clearance adjudicators consider convictions or determinations by commanding officers that an individual committed sexual assault, sexual harassment, fraud, or other violations that could make the individual susceptible to blackmail.
- Transfers Investigations of Senior Leader Misconduct from Coast Guard to DHS IG:** Requires any credible allegation of misconduct, as defined by DOD policy, made against a Coast Guard senior officer or Senior Executive Service member to be referred to the Department of Homeland Security's Inspector General, rather than being internally investigated by the Coast Guard.
- Demands Reporting of Retaliation Against Victims:** Requires documentation of all reports of retaliation related to sexual misconduct made by Coast Guard personnel and to include information about sexual misconduct cases involving retaliation in the Coast Guard's annual reports to Congress. The law adds the Coast Guard to the DOD's statutory requirements to better assist the Coast Guard and Congress in understanding the extent to which retaliation is occurring.

- **Establishes Policies and Procedures to Ban Hazing and Bullying:** Strengthens policies to prevent and prescribe punishments for bullying and hazing at the Coast Guard Academy. Requires the Secretary to submit an annual report to Congress for six years covering efforts to prevent, respond to, and track hazing and bullying in the Coast Guard, training provided to service members related to hazing and bullying; a summary of recent reporting of hazing and bullying incidents; and recommendations on how the Commandant can improve hazing and bullying prevention and response. It also requires the Commandant to improve training to help Coast Guard members recognize, prevent, and respond to hazing and bullying.

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