

**Senate Commerce Committee Coast Guard Nominee Questionnaire,
119th Congress**

Instructions for the nominees: The Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation (the “Committee”) requests that you provide typed answers to each of the following questions. It is also requested that you type the question in full before each response. Do not leave any questions blank. Type “None” or “Not Applicable” if a question does not apply to you. Begin each section (*i.e.*, “A”, “B”, etc.) on a new sheet of paper. Electronically submit your completed questionnaire to the Committee in PDF format and ensure that sections A through E of the completed questionnaire are in a text searchable and that any hyperlinks are active and can be clicked. Section F may be scanned for electronic submission and need not be searchable.

Incomplete questionnaires may delay the nomination process.

A. BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION AND QUALIFICATIONS

1. Name (Include any former names or nicknames used):

Wilborne Earl Watson (Will)

2. Position to which nominated:

Rear Admiral, U.S. Coast Guard

3. Date of Nomination:

22 October 2025

4. Address (List current place of residence and office addresses):

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

5. Date and Place of Birth:

[REDACTED]

6. Provide the name, position, and place of employment for your spouse (if married) or domestic partner, and the names and ages of your children (including stepchildren and children by a previous marriage).

Spouse: Yashica LaKisha Watson (Teacher – Belle Chasse Academy)

Children: Jori Briana Watson (20)

[REDACTED]

7. List all college and graduate schools attended, whether or not you were granted a degree by the institution. Provide the name of the institution, the dates attended, the degree received, and the date of the degree.

- **Master of Science, National Security Strategy, 2018**
National War College, National Defense University, Washington, D.C. (2017-2018)
- **Master of Business Administration, 2003**
Loyola University, New Orleans, LA (2001-2003)
- **University of New Orleans, LA (2000-2001)**
- **Master of Arts, Education - Curriculum and Instruction, 1999**
Xavier University, New Orleans, LA (1998-1999)
- **Bachelor of Science, Biology, 1996**
Xavier University, New Orleans, LA (1992-1996)

8. List all post-undergraduate employment, including the job title, name of employer, and inclusive dates of employment, and highlight all management-level jobs held and any non-managerial jobs that relate to the position for which you are nominated.

I have been an active duty Coast Guard Officer since 1996. Please see my official Coast Guard biography and chronology of work history.

9. Attach a copy of your resume.

My official Coast Guard biography and chronology of work history are attached.

10. List any advisory, consultative, honorary, or other part-time service or positions with Federal, State, or local governments, other than those listed above after 18 years of age.

None.

11. List all positions held as an officer, director, trustee, partner, proprietor, agent, representative, or consultant of any corporation, company, firm, partnership, or other business, enterprise, educational, or other institution.

Vice President, East Jackson (TN) Community Empowerment Program (Education, health and wellness, mental and physical fitness), Nonprofit, 2014-2021

Immediate Past President, National Naval Officers Association, Nonprofit, 2016-2018

President, National Naval Officers Association, Nonprofit, 2014-2016

12. List all memberships you have had after 18 years of age or currently hold with any civic, social, charitable, educational, political, professional, fraternal, benevolent or religiously affiliated organization, private club, or other membership organization (You do not have to list your religious affiliation or membership in a religious house of worship or institution). Include dates of membership and any positions you have held with any organization. Please note whether any such club or organization restricts membership on the basis of sex, race, color, religion, national origin, age, or disability.

Member, National Naval Officers Association (2002-Present)

This organization does not restrict membership on the basis of sex, race, color, religion, national origin, age, or disability.

13. Have you ever been a candidate for and/or held a public office (elected, non-elected, or appointed)? If so, indicate whether any campaign has any outstanding debt, the amount, and whether you are personally liable for that debt.

No.

14. List all memberships and offices held with and services rendered to, whether compensated or not, any political party or election committee within the past ten years. If you have held a paid position or served in a formal or official advisory position (whether compensated or not) in a political campaign within the past ten years, identify the particulars of the campaign, including the candidate, year of the campaign, and your title and responsibilities.

None.

15. Itemize all political contributions to any individual, campaign organization, political party, political action committee, or similar entity of \$200 or more for the past ten years.

None.

16. List all scholarships, fellowships, honorary degrees, honorary society memberships, military medals, and any other special recognition for outstanding service or achievements.

Military Personal Awards:

Legion of Merit (4)

Meritorious Service Medal (2)

Coast Guard Commendation Medal (3)

Coast Guard Achievement Medal (3)

Armed Forces Service Medal

Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal

Fellowship:

Massachusetts Institute of Technology Seminar XXI - 2016-2017

Scholarship:

Coast Guard College Student Pre-commissioning Initiative - 1995

17. List all books, articles, columns, letters to the editor, Internet blog postings, or other publications you have authored, individually or with others. Include a link to each publication when possible. If a link is not available, provide a digital copy of the publication when available.

**Co-Author, Article, “Corporate Philanthropy: When is giving effective?”
Journal of Corporate Accounting and Finance (co-authored with
Professor of Accounting and classmates from Loyola University, New
Orleans, MBA program) October 2003. (I do not have a link or digital
copy).**

**Author, Article, “A Tale of Two Responses: Coast Guard Proceedings,”
Oct-Dec 1998. [Vol55 No4 Oct-Dec1998.pdf](#)**

18. List all speeches, panel discussions, and presentations (e.g., PowerPoint) that you have given on topics relevant to the position for which you have been nominated. Include a link to each publication when possible. If a link is not available, provide a digital copy of the speech or presentation when available.

8 Aug 2025	Guest Speaker: Coast Guard City Designation celebration/event, Corpus Christi, TX. City of Corpus Christi Official Designation as United States Coast Guard City
1 Aug 2025	Keynote Remarks (as incoming Commander): Heartland District Change of Command Ceremony. (Attached)
20 Mar 2025	Guest Speaker: Public Affairs & Communication Strategy Qualification Course Graduation Ceremony, Defense Information School, Fort Meade, MD. (Attached).
18 Jan 2024	Keynote Remarks: U.S. Navy League Congressional Status Report and Reception, Washington, D.C. (Attached).
9 June 2023	Keynote Remarks: Navy League Sea Services Awards Luncheon, Dallas, TX. (Attached).

- 10 Nov 2022 Panel: Considerations of Unified Command - Clean Gulf Conference & Exhibition, New Orleans, LA. (link or digital copy not available)**
- 11 March 2022 Remarks: Mississippi Valley Trade and Transport Council Conference, New Orleans, LA. (link or digital copy not available)**
- 17 Feb 2022 Presentation: Lessons Learned from Hurricane Ida, Propeller Club Port of New Orleans & Greater New Orleans Council of the Navy League - Lunch and Learn, New Orleans, LA. (link or digital copy not available)**
- 6 Aug 2020 Panel: USCG Sector Commanders Panel - Gulf Intracoastal Canal Association, New Orleans, LA. (link or digital copy not available)**
- 4 Aug 2020 Presentation: Leadership - Lessons I learned along the way, National Naval Officers Association, Virtual Presentation. (link or digital copy not available)**

In addition to these external engagements, I provided numerous remarks internal to the Coast Guard, including leadership development courses, promotion ceremonies, retirement and change of command ceremonies.

19. List all public statements you have made during the past ten years, including statements in news articles and radio and podcasts and television appearances, which are on topics relevant to the position for which you have been nominated, including dates. Include a link to each statement when possible. If a link is not available, provide a digital copy of the statement when available.

- 19 April 2024 Francis Scott Key Bridge Press Conference - [April 19, 2024 | Governor Wes Moore Press Conference on the Collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge](#)**
- 16 April 2024 Francis Scott Key Bridge Press Conference - [April 16, 2024 | Governor Wes Moore Press Conference on the Collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge](#)**

Sep 2021 Multiple news stories and articles related to Hurricane Ida response and recovery operations.

Example: 2 Sep 2021 – [DVIDS - Video - Coast Guard continues Hurricane Ida recovery operations](#)

April 2021 Multiple news stories and articles related to the capsizing of the M/V SEACOR POWER.

Example: 14 April 2021 - ['We are hopeful', search-party grows as Coast Guard continues to search for missing crew members after their vessel capsized](#)

26 Aug 2020 Video: “[Always Ready](#)” Remarks on Coast Guard readiness as Hurricane Laura approached Louisiana.

20. List all digital platforms (including social media and other digital content sites) on which you currently or have formerly operated an account, regardless of whether or not the account was held in your name or an alias. Include the full name of an “alias” or “handle”, including the complete URL and username with hyperlinks, you have used on each of the named platforms. Indicate whether the account is active, deleted, or dormant. Include a link to each account if possible.

Facebook - Will Watson (active) ([\(20+\) Facebook](#))

Will Watson (dormant)

Twitter - [@willewatson1](#) (deleted)

Instagram - [will_e_w](#) (active) ([Will Watson \(@will_e_w\)](#))

LinkedIn - Wilborne Watson (active) ([\(21\) Wilborne Watson | LinkedIn](#))

21. Identify each instance in which you have testified orally or in writing before Congress in a governmental or non-governmental capacity and specify the date, committee, and subject matter of each testimony.

Not applicable.

22. Given the current mission, major programs, and major operational objectives of the Coast Guard, what in your background or employment experience do you believe affirmatively qualifies you for appointment to the position for

which you have been nominated, and why do you wish to serve in that position?

After over 30 years of service to our Nation, I have gained a wealth of knowledge and experience that has broadened my capacity and desire to continue to serve.

I am currently assigned as the Commander, Heartland District. In this position, I am responsible for Coast Guard operations spanning 26 states, including the Gulf of America coastline from the Florida panhandle to the United States border with Mexico, the adjacent offshore waters and outer continental shelf, and the inland waterways of the Mississippi, Ohio, Missouri, Illinois, and Tennessee River systems.

Prior to this assignment, I served as the Director of Governmental and Public Affairs. In this role, I gained tremendous insight into the key challenges and opportunities facing the Coast Guard. Accordingly, I was privileged to lead enterprise communications efforts designed to increase awareness, understanding and support thereby.

Prior operational tours include serving as Commander, Sector New Orleans - one of the Coast Guard's largest sector commands. Of note, during this tour of duty, I served as Coast Guard Incident Commander for Hurricane Ida Response and Recovery Operations. This experience, along with numerous others, where I led large scale crisis response operations, has been integral to my development as a senior leader.

I have served as Senior Military Assistant to the Secretary of Homeland Security, as Executive Assistant to the Vice Commandant, and as a Coast Guard Congressional Affairs Liaison. Each of these experiences was vital in building my professional acumen and preparing me to lead at the next level within the world's best Coast Guard.

If I am confirmed, I look forward to continuing to serve with the great men and women in our service, always extending our very best to protect, defend and save.

23. What do you believe are your responsibilities, if confirmed, to ensure that the Coast Guard has proper management and accounting controls, and what experience do you have in managing a large organization?

As a senior leader in the Coast Guard, one of my most important obligations is to ensure the proper management and accounting of resources entrusted to the organization. I have been committed to doing so throughout my career and will endeavor to continually seek ways to instill good stewardship overall.

My experience leading large organizations includes serving as Commander Heartland District, where I lead one of the largest District Commands in the Coast Guard, with an area of responsibility spanning 26 states. My experience also includes serving as Director of Governmental and Public Affairs for the Coast Guard, and as Commander, Sector New Orleans - one of the Coast Guard's largest Sector Commands. I also served as Military Assistant to the Secretary of Homeland Security from 2015-2017. In that role, I supported Cabinet-level leadership and administration of one of the government's largest federal executive departments. As Executive Assistant to the Vice Commandant, I served as his direct representative on all matters related to the operation and administration of the Coast Guard.

In each of these key roles, I was, and have been, careful to ensure the effective and efficient employment of resources in my charge. I will continue to do so going forward.

24. What do you believe to be the top three challenges facing the Coast Guard, and why?

The Coast Guard faces a number of critical challenges ahead. One of the most urgent has been a historic personnel shortage. Fortunately, we have begun to see tremendous success in our recruiting efforts. In fact, in fiscal year 2025, we exceeded our annual recruiting goals. We are certainly encouraged, but realize that our work continues in this regard.

The Coast Guard is currently undertaking a major effort to recapitalize its aging operational assets and shore infrastructure. Many of our cutters and aircraft are decades old and have increasingly become more costly to operate and maintain. Likewise, our shore infrastructure is in decline with a significant maintenance backlog that grows annually.

As the maritime industry moves toward more advanced technologies to include A.I., automation, and autonomous transport, it is important that the Coast Guard continue to accelerate its knowledge and understanding of the same. This is a key challenge for us. Strategic focus in this area is not only important for improving the business practices and operations of the service, but it is also critical in our ability to protect and support our Nation's Marine Transportation System, which is increasingly reliant on these technologies.

B. POTENTIAL CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

1. Describe all financial arrangements, deferred compensation agreements, and other continuing dealings with business associates, clients, or customers. Please include information related to retirement accounts, such as a 401(k) or pension plan.

Please see my nominee PFDR.

2. Do you have any commitments or agreements, formal or informal, to maintain employment, affiliation, or practice with any business, association, or other organization during your appointment? If so, please explain.

No.

3. Indicate any investments, obligations, liabilities, or other relationships which could involve potential conflicts of interest in the position to which you have been nominated. Explain how you will resolve each potential conflict of interest.

Please see my nominee PFDR. If any conflicts of interest or potential conflicts of interest arise, I will obtain advice from a Coast Guard ethics official and follow that advice.

4. Describe any business relationship, dealing, or financial transaction which you have had during the last ten years, whether for yourself, on behalf of a client, or acting as an agent, that could in any way constitute or result in a possible conflict of interest in the position to which you have been nominated. Explain how you will resolve each potential conflict of interest.

None, but if any conflict of interest or potential conflict of interest arises, I will obtain advice from a Coast Guard ethics official and follow that advice.

5. Identify any other potential conflicts of interest and explain how you will resolve each potential conflict of interest.

None, but if any conflict of interest or potential conflict of interest arises, I will obtain advice from a Coast Guard ethics official and follow that advice.

6. Describe any activity during the past ten years, including the names of clients represented, in which you have been engaged for the purpose of directly or indirectly influencing the passage, defeat, or modification of any legislation or affecting the administration and execution of law or public policy.

I served as the Coast Guard Director of Governmental and Public Affairs from May of 2023 to July of 2025. My responsibilities in this role included providing Congress information on Coast Guard programs and policies and potential impacts of proposed legislation.

7. Do you agree, if confirmed, to ensure that you and other members of your organization protect from retaliation any military member, federal employee, or contractor employee who testifies before, or communicates with this Committee, its subcommittees, and any other appropriate committee of Congress?

Yes.

C. LEGAL MATTERS

1. Have you ever been disciplined or cited for a breach of ethics, professional misconduct, or retaliation by, or been the subject of a complaint to, any court, administrative agency, the Office of Special Counsel, an Inspector General, professional association, disciplinary committee, or other professional group? If yes:
 - a. Provide the name of the court, agency, association, committee, or group;
 - b. Provide the date the citation, disciplinary action, complaint, or personnel action was issued or initiated;
 - c. Describe the citation, disciplinary action, complaint, or personnel action;
 - d. Provide the results of the citation, disciplinary action, complaint, or personnel action.

No.

2. Have you ever been investigated, arrested, charged, or held by any Federal, State, or other law enforcement authority of any Federal, State, county, municipal, or foreign government entity, other than for a minor traffic offense? If so, please explain.

No.

3. Have you or any business or nonprofit of which you are or were an officer ever been involved as a party in an administrative agency proceeding, criminal proceeding, or civil litigation? If so, please explain.

I have no new matters that were not previously disclosed in my O7 Senate Questionnaire. The matter I previously disclosed is as follows:

I became a member of the National Naval Officers Association (NNOA) in 2002 and served as President from 2014-2016. I am aware that NNOA was involved in a lawsuit in 1998, prior to my joining. I have no firsthand knowledge of the matter.

4. Have you ever been convicted (including pleas of guilty or *nolo contendere*) of any criminal violation other than a minor traffic offense? If so, please explain.

No.

5. Have you ever been accused, formally or informally, of sexual assault, sexual harassment, or discrimination on the basis of sex, race, religion, whistleblower activity, or any other basis? If so, please explain.

No.

6. Please advise the Committee of any additional information, favorable or unfavorable, which you feel should be disclosed in connection with your nomination.

None.

D. RELATIONSHIP WITH COMMITTEE

1. Will you ensure that your department/agency/commission/corporation complies with deadlines for information set by congressional committees, and that your department/agency/commission/corporation endeavors to timely comply with requests for information from individual Members of Congress, including requests from members in the minority?

Yes.

2. Will you ensure that your department/agency/commission/corporation does whatever it can to protect congressional witnesses and whistleblowers from reprisal for their testimony and disclosures?

Yes.

3. Will you cooperate in providing the Committee with requested witnesses, including technical experts and career employees, with firsthand knowledge of matters of interest to the Committee?

Yes.

4. Are you willing to appear and testify before any duly constituted committee of the Congress on such occasions as you may be reasonably requested to do so

Yes.

5. Do you agree, if confirmed, to keep this Committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate Committees of Congress, and their respective staffs apprised of new information that materially impacts the accuracy of testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information you or your organization previously provided?

Yes.

6. Do you agree, if confirmed, and on request, to provide this Committee and its subcommittees with records and other information within their oversight jurisdiction, even absent a formal Committee request?

Yes.

7. Do you agree, if confirmed, to ensure that you and other members of your organization protect from retaliation any military member, federal employee, or contractor employee who testifies before, or communicates with this Committee, its subcommittees, and any other appropriate committee of Congress?

Yes.

(Nominee is to include this signed affidavit along with answers to the above questions.)

F. AFFIDAVIT

WILBORNE E. WATSON being duly sworn, hereby states that he/she has read and signed the foregoing Statement on Biographical and Financial Information and that the information provided therein is, to the best of his/her knowledge, current, accurate, and complete.

W. E. Watson

Signature of Nominee

Subscribed and sworn before me this 14 day of Nov, 20 25.

[Signature]
Notary Public



RDML Wilborne (Will) E. Watson

Chronology of Work History

Current Assignment

Aug 25 - Present Commander, Heartland District

Assignment History

May 2023 - Aug 25	Director of Governmental and Public Affairs
May 22 - May 23	Executive Assistant to the Vice Commandant
May 20 - May 22	Sector New Orleans, LA, Sector Commander
Jun 18 - May 20	Sector New Orleans, LA, Deputy Sector Commander
Aug 17 - Jun 18	DUINS, National War College, Washington, DC, Fellow
Jul 15 - Jul 17	DHS HQ, Washington, DC, Military Asst. to the Secretary
Jun 12 - Jul 15	Marine Safety Unit Lake Charles, LA, Commanding Officer
Apr 10 - Jun 12	Marine Safety Unit Texas City, TX, Executive Officer
Jun 07 - Apr 10	Congressional Affairs, Washington, DC, Liaison
Jun 05 - Jun 07	Marine Safety Unit Cleveland, OH, Executive Officer
Aug 01 - Jun 05	Eighth District Office, New Orleans, LA, Budget Officer
Aug 00 - Aug 01	Duty Under Instruction - Financial Management Loyola University, LA & University of New Orleans, LA
Jan 97 - Aug 00	Marine Safety Office New Orleans, LA, Port Operations Officer

Educational Summary

2018	National War College, Washington, DC, Master of Science, National Security Strategy
2017	Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Seminar XXI
2010	Marine Industry Training, Port Safety & Security
2003	Loyola University, New Orleans, LA, Master of Business Administration
1999	Xavier University, New Orleans, LA, Master of Arts
1996	Xavier University, New Orleans, LA, Bachelor of Science

Military Awards and Significant National Recognition or Achievement

2025	Legion of Merit
2023	Legion of Merit
2022	Legion of Merit
2022	Type 1 Incident Commander
2017	Legion of Merit
2016	DHS Personnel Staff Badge
2015	Meritorious Service Medal
2014	Honorary Chief Petty Officer
2012	Coast Guard Commendation Medal

2010	Meritorious Service Medal
2009	Coast Guard Achievement Medal
2007	Coast Guard Commendation Medal
2006	Coast Guard Achievement Medal
2005	Coast Guard Commendation Medal
2000	Coast Guard Achievement Medal



Rear Admiral Will E. Watson

Commander, Heartland District

U.S. Coast Guard



Rear Admiral Watson serves as Commander, Heartland District where he is responsible for Coast Guard operations spanning 26 states, including the Gulf of America coastline from the Florida panhandle to the United States border with Mexico, the adjacent offshore waters and outer continental shelf, and the inland waterways of the Mississippi, Ohio, Missouri, Illinois, and Tennessee River systems.

In his previous assignment, he served as the Director of Governmental and Public Affairs, where he was responsible for external engagement with Congress, the media, and other inter-governmental entities.

Admiral Watson's operational tours include serving as Commander, Sector New Orleans from 2018-2022, where he directed all Coast Guard missions in an area of responsibility that includes the Louisiana Gulf Coast and the Mississippi River System from Baton Rouge to the Gulf of America - among the largest, and most complex coastal and port areas in the United States. Of note, during this tour of duty, he served as Incident Commander for Hurricane Ida Response and Recovery Operations following the catastrophic impacts of one of the most powerful hurricanes to ever make landfall on the U.S. mainland. Admiral Watson also served as Commanding Officer at Marine Safety Unit Lake Charles, Louisiana, from 2012 to 2015, and as Executive Officer at Marine Safety Unit Texas City, Texas, from 2010 to 2012. From 2005 to 2007, he served as Executive Officer at Marine Safety Unit Cleveland, Ohio. During this tour of duty, in 2005, he deployed to Joint Field Office Baton Rouge in support of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita Response and Recovery Operations.

Admiral Watson's staff assignments include serving as Senior Military Assistant to the Secretary of Homeland Security, as Executive Assistant to the Vice Commandant, and as Congressional Affairs Liaison.

Admiral Watson holds a Master of Science in National Security Strategy from the National War College in Washington, D.C., a Master of Business Administration from Loyola University, New Orleans, Louisiana, as well as a Master of Arts in Education and a Bachelor of Science in Biology from Xavier University in New Orleans, Louisiana. Admiral Watson is a 2016-2017 Fellow of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Seminar XXI on Foreign Politics, International Relations and the National Interest. He has earned numerous personal, unit, and service awards during 30 years of service.