

United States Senate

Ted Stevens
Alaska

Washington, DC 20510
(202) 224-3004
Fax (202) 224-2354

Committees:
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Appropriations
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April 30, 2008

Adm. Thad Allen
Commandant
Coast Guard Headquarters
2100 Second Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20593

Dear Thad:

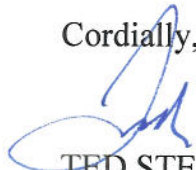
It has come to my attention that some in the towing industry have voiced concerns with your proposed changes to the Federal regulations governing training and service requirements for Merchant Marine operators on towing vessels (Federal Register Volume 72, No 179, page 52846). The basis of the concern focuses on a perceived relaxation of the training and qualification requirements for towing officers through a process called "alternative progression."

As you are aware, Alaskans rely on the safe and efficient transport of goods by the towing industry so I am interested in any changes to Federal regulations that might be considered by some to reduce safety. I am specifically interested in why the Coast Guard initiated a proposed rulemaking to change the regulations governing training and service requirements for towing officers, the practical effect of the proposed changes, why this change would be an improvement to current regulations, and what impact, if any, you see on the safety of the towing industry.

I know you share my commitment to safe and efficient maritime commerce, not only in Alaska, but throughout the nation. I look forward to your reply and thank you for your continued dedicated service.

With best wishes,

Cordially,



TED STEVENS