



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0917

January 4, 2023

Admiral Linda L. Fagan, USCG
Commandant, United States Coast Guard
2703 Martin Luther King AVE SE
Washington, DC 20593

Dear Admiral Fagan:

I write to you concerning the United States Coast Guard Academy (USCGA) cadets who have elected not to take the COVID-19 vaccine for religious reasons. Can you confirm there are cadets who were disenrolled from the USCGA and discharged from the Coast Guard earlier this year when their religious accommodation requests against the COVID-19 military vaccine mandate were denied?

These young men and women truly represent the best and brightest of America and serving in the Coast Guard as commissioned officers and Academy graduates was a major component of each their individual American Dream. Some of them immigrants, some sons and daughters of immigrants, some first-generation college students, all of them are “young men and women with sound bodies, stout hearts, and alert minds”¹ and they are “strong in the resolve to be worthy of the traditions of commissioned officers in the United States Coast Guard, in the service of their country and humanity”². I request that you invite them to rejoin the service and bring them back to New London to rejoin their classmates in time to begin the next academic and military training term in January.

The vaccine mandate was repealed in the National Defense Authorization Act and signed into law by President Biden last month. Multiple lawsuits against the Coast Guard are pending which challenge the legality of the COVID vaccine mandate and/or of the Coast Guard’s denial of each of these cadets’ religious accommodation requests.

I urge you to do the right thing and bring these willing young men and women back to the Academy and to the service to which they have pledged their best efforts. I understand that the Air Force Academy, the Naval Academy, the Merchant Marine Academy and West Point allowed cadets or midshipmen to continue their studies at their academies during the Fall of 2022, and continue to do so, despite those cadets being unvaccinated due to religious

¹ United States Coast Guard Academy Mission statement - <https://uscga.edu/mission/>, accessed 12/13/2022.

² Ibid.

objections. There appears to be no reason the Coast Guard Academy cadets should be treated differently.

The Coast Guard's readiness to perform its vital missions for our Nation and our citizens requires a robust, well-trained, and cohesive workforce. The vaccine mandate has reduced military readiness across all the services, especially in the Coast Guard, and eroded morale and unit cohesion as important positions are now unfilled, recruiting is down, and public confidence in the military is declining. Can you provide an assurance that going forward no cadets will be dismissed from the USCGA, denied a commission, prohibited from graduating, or otherwise discriminated against based upon their COVID-19 vaccination status? What are your intentions with individuals who were reprimanded, discharged, or penalized for refusing the COVID-19 vaccine or filing a religious exception? Will you work towards restoring both the readiness and the reputation of the USCGA?

Thank you for your consideration in this important matter, I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W. Gregory Steube', written in a cursive style.

W. Gregory Steube
Member of Congress

cc:

Secretary Of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin
Deputy Commandant for Mission Support Vice Admiral Paul Thomas
Deputy for Personnel Readiness Rear Admiral Eric Jones
Superintendent, U.S. Coast Guard Academy Rear Admiral William Kelly