



Lt Gen Dana T. Atkins, USAF (Ret)
President and CEO

May 9, 2019

Representative Raul Grijalva
Chair, House Committee
on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

Representative Rob Bishop
Ranking Member, House Committee
on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

Representative Jared Huffman
Chair, Subcommittee on Water,
Power, and Oceans
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Tom McClintock
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on
Water, Power, and Oceans
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Grijalva, Bishop, Huffman and McClintock,

On behalf of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA), the nation's leading voice for commissioned officers from the seven uniformed services, I am writing to support H.R.2406, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Officer Corps Amendment Act of 2019. With growing concerns over China, coupled with strategic interests in the Arctic and Asia-Pacific regions, a flexible mission-ready maritime presence is warranted. The unique scientific and operational expertise, flexibility, and deployment capability of the NOAA Corps continues to be a force multiplier for U.S. and ally air, land, and sea operations.

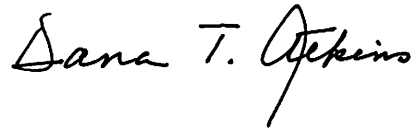
The NOAA Corps consists of trained personnel in engineering, earth sciences, oceanography, meteorology, and other related disciplines essential to our national defense; however, NOAA is without the authority to manage the size and composition of its corps. This bill would enable the Secretary of Commerce to annually authorize up to 500 officers, based on emerging needs. According to NOAA, the allowed number of 321 is not adequate to meet mission obligations. In addition to this increase in authorized strength, the amendments include obligated service requirements ensuring the time and training acquired by officers would be appropriately retained and employed similarly to other uniformed services.

In order to stay competitive with the private sector there is need for recruitment incentives in the form of education benefits. The legislation includes a pre-commissioning program, which provides financial assistance to support tuition for prospective officer candidates in exchange for obligated service. The bill also authorizes the Secretary to create educational loan and interest payment financial assistance. Including these incentives would make NOAA competitive with both

the public/private sector and other uniform services for desirable and qualified candidates.

MOAA appreciates your leadership on this important issue of sustaining our NOAA Corps. We look forward to working alongside your committees to pass this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dana T. Atkins". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "D".

Cc: Chair/Ranking Member Committee on Armed Services
Chair/Ranking Member Committee on Veterans Affairs
Chair/Ranking Member Committee on Oversight and Reform