

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0901

December 2, 2025

Admiral Kevin E. Lunday
Acting Commandant, United States Coast Guard
2703 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave. SE
Washington, D.C. 20593

Dear Admiral Lunday:

I am proud to support the One Big Beautiful Bill Act and all that it means for rebuilding the United States Coast Guard (USCG), including the more than \$4 billion provided for shore facilities like those located in East Pass. I am writing to express my concerns regarding the lights on markers Three and Four in Destin's East Pass that have been broken since at least 2021 in the sole inlet that connects the Gulf of America (GOA) to Destin Harbor.

These deficiencies pose serious safety and economic risks to Destin's gateway to the GOA, which sees extensive vessel traffic. Destin's Harbor, along East Pass, saw daily entry and exits of more than 1,500 vessels on weekdays and more than 2,000 vessels on weekends. For perspective, the busiest port in the Western hemisphere, the Port of Los Angeles, handled only 1,807 vessel arrivals during calendar year 2024, and the Port of Mobile handled only 312 vessels in calendar year 2022. Beyond the more than 29,000 saltwater fishing licenses issued to addresses in Okaloosa County, countywide tourism generates \$3.3 billion in direct visitor spending and supports 51,000 jobs.

I am alarmed that, when adjusting the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's 2024 accident data for population, ***the accident rate in Okaloosa County was 530% more than Miami-Dade County***, which had the largest number of accidents. Unfortunately, the number of accidents near East Pass increased by 100% from 2021 to 2024 and approximately 70% of reported accidents in Okaloosa County occurred near East Pass. Therefore, "to aid navigation and to prevent disasters, collisions, and wrecks of vessels" and to "serve the needs ... of the commerce of the United States" under 14 U.S.C. § 541, the USCG should immediately replace markers Three and Four.

While I appreciate the USCG's interim efforts in recent months, a large vessel recently collided with the East Jetty despite these measures. Due to the condition of these ATONs, I understand full restoration will require replacement of both ATONs. I look forward to your response and to working with you to achieve timely restoration of East Pass navigational capabilities.

Sincerely,



Jimmy Patronis
Member of Congress