

\$10 billion Coast Guard budget act named for LoBiondo

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Retiring U.S. Frank LoBiondo, R-2nd, is celebrating congressional approval of a bill to authorize a two-year, \$10 billion budget for the Coast Guard — and it's named after him.

The Frank LoBiondo Coast Guard Authorization Act now goes to President Donald Trump for his signature.

“Naming this legislation for our retiring colleague ... is an acknowledgement of his championship of the Coast Guard throughout his congressional career,” said Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Bill Shuster, R-Pa.

LoBiondo is a senior member of the House Coast Guard & Maritime Transportation Subcommittee.

“So few issues have been bipartisan across the board during my time in Congress, but supporting the Coast Guard was always one of them,” said LoBiondo, who has been in the House since 1995 and did not run for reelection this year. “It is one of the truest honors of my life to have represented the Coast Guard Training Center in Cape May and Air Station Atlantic City for 24 years in Congress.”

Passed with bipartisan support, the measure provides \$7.9 billion for operating expenses and \$2.9 billion for construction, renovation and facilities improvement, according to LoBiondo.

It is not yet known whether any of the construction funds will be used at the Cape May facility, said LoBiondo's chief of staff Jason Galanes.

The legislation also provides as much as \$167 million for three new fast-response cutters, authorizes a multiyear contract for three national security cutters and requires the Coast Guard to establish its own land-based unmanned aircraft system program.

It will provide regulatory relief for fishermen in New Jersey, LoBiondo said, by eliminating a requirement that both the Coast Guard and Environmental Protection Agency maintain discharge requirements for commercial fishing vessels.