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NEWS RELEASE

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RELEASE: September 5, 1997



Governor Signs Legislation Extending Preferential Hiring Treatment To Coast Guard Members Who Received Medal of Honor or Navy Cross

Gov. Christie Whitman today paid tribute to the men and women of the United States Coast Guard as she signed legislation extending preferential treatment for employment and promotions under the New Jersey Civil Service Merit System to Coast Guard veterans who received the Medal of Honor or the Navy Cross.

The bill extends to Coast Guard members the same preferential hiring treatment previously accorded to honors recipients from the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps.

"Today, we are rectifying an oversight in state law that has denied certain Coast Guard veterans the same employment and promotion opportunities available to members of other branches of the service," Whitman said. "Now, these Coast Guard veterans -- persons who have received our nation's highest military honors -- will receive the recognition they are due. As far as I'm concerned, those who have proved themselves through heroic service in America's defense shouldn't have to prove themselves on a civil service exam. They've earned far more gratitude that we can possibly express."

Under the new law, S-631, appointing authorities in state, county and local governments which are in the New Jersey Civil Service Merit System can hire or promote without Merit System Board examinations Coast Guard veterans who received the Medal of Honor or Navy Cross. Previously, only veterans who served in the Army, Navy, Air Force or Marine Corps who received either the Medal of Honor, the Distinguished Service Cross, Air Force Cross or Navy Cross were eligible for exemptions from the examinations.

The bill was sponsored by Senators James S. Cafiero (R-Cape May/Atlantic/Cumberland) and Robert W. Singer (R- Burlington/Monmouth/Ocean).

Whitman said on an average day, the men and women of the United States Coast Guard save 32 lives, respond to 34 oil or hazardous chemical spills, seize more than \$8 million in illegal contraband, and conduct 142 search and rescue missions.

According to the Governor, 35,000 men and women serving in the Coast Guard and 1,000 Coast Guard veterans live in New Jersey.

"As the smallest of the nation's armed services, the Coast Guard doesn't always receive the recognition it deserves," Whitman said. "But those of us who know what they do --and know how important the Coast Guard's work is -- don't make that mistake. The Coast Guard is 'Always Ready' -- ready to interdict drug smugglers seeking to bring their poison to our shores, ready to aid mariners in distress, and ready to enforce the law of the seas."