

# Congressmen tour LNG tanker proposed route

By Dotti Farrington

U.S. Congressmen Patrick Kennedy (D-RI) and Elijah Cummings (D-MD) each cited possibilities for blocking the proposed liquefied natural gas (LNG) plans that would affect Narragansett Bay.

They spoke at a press conference Monday in Newport after taking a tour of the bay aboard a Coast Guard vessel along the route LNG tankers would take if plans for an LNG terminal in Fall River, Mass. go forward.

The Weaver's Cove/Hess plans for the terminal are awaiting a final report on safety and security by the Coast Guard. Coast Guard officials said Monday the report may be completed within four to six weeks. The preliminary report in May suggested safety and security of the route could not be assured and the report was hailed by LNG opponents as killing the plans. Weaver's Cove said it was continuing to prepare to build the LNG terminal in Fall River.

Opponents to the Fall River plans have said they are looking for a safer solution and believe no LNG facility should be located in any area as densely populated as the bay area.

### Cummings' role

Cummings is a senior member of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, and a member of the subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines and Hazardous Materials. He was named early this year as chairman of the House Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation. He also is opposing an LNG on-land facility in his own state.

Cummings said in an interview after the press conference that "even if the Coast Guard has everything it needs to carry out increasing duties, more still needs to be done to oversee LNG operations."

He specified that state governments need to put in place ways to recover costs for state

and local expenses to have LNG operations within their boundaries. "The issue of costs imposed on communities (by LNG operations) is central among concerns," Cummings said.

Kennedy invited Cummings to see for himself the 26-mile route along Narragansett Bay that would be used for tankers here. Both are seventh term federal legislators.

After the tour, Cummings said seeing both the beauty of the bay and hearing the details of the LNG tanker impacts were far more informative than reading about the situation. He explained that what he saw and learned confirmed and added to his concerns about safety and security for any area impacted by the presence of LNG.

He said the Coast Guard is being asked to increase its authority over LNG activities, as well as increase its responsibilities for many aspects of security of the nation's waterways and ports, especially in relationship to concerns about terrorism. He said the work has been increasing since 9/11, but the resources of the Coast Guard have not been increasing at the same rate.

Cummings said the United States Coast Guard is the best in the world, but it cannot continue to assume more duties without the money, personnel, equipment and technology to do so. He said he is committed to get all that the Coast Guard needs, but until all that is needed is in place, he will oppose adding work, such as that involved in securing waterways impacted by LNG tankers.

The Baltimore-based Congressman reported "in the bigger picture," the Coast Guard is being asked to secure the nation from impacts of other hazardous materials and that work requires



U.S. Rep. Patrick Kennedy continues to fight to keep LNG tankers out of Narragansett Bay. Photo by Dotti Farrington

providing for more of everything for the Coast Guard.

At the press conference, on the fuel dock of Goat Island Marina in Newport, the Maryland leader detailed work that he and others in Congress have achieved in recent months. He said he is working to make the Coast Guard "the strongest it can be." In the matter of LNG installations, he reported, "the people, properties and entire environments must be protected, whether it involves accidental or intentional threats. If we mandate the services but do not provide resources, that is a problem."

He said his subcommittee has prepared legislation that specifies how the Coast Guard must certify the safety and security for LNG installations, or that the installations must certify they

can provide such measures that are the same as the Coast Guard would. If the required certification cannot be provided, "the installations cannot go forward."

Cummings also detailed pending legislation that reinstates power and authority to governors to veto any LNG plans. He said the power was removed by the Bush administration in its push to respond to energy needs.

About why resources are not already in place, Cummings remarked, "As Nancy Pelosi says, there's a new sheriff in town... We're hearing the resources are not there. Our responsibility as Americans is to provide what we need."

He talked about the "awesome beauty" of the bay. He said "we must provide the best quality of life for all. LNG is quite disruptive." He promised to go back to Washington to tell what he saw here and to continue working to ensure that quality of life.

Cummings also commended the work of the Newport Chamber of Commerce for its report about the LNG impacts on the environmental and economic aspects of the bay. He said such documentation was very much needed. Chamber President Keith Stokes detailed findings of that report, due to be released soon. State Representative Raymond Gallison (D-Bristol, Portsmouth), a leading opponent of LNG, also spoke.

### Kennedy's role

Rhode Island's congressman emphasized the need for any energy installation to operate safely. He detailed major impacts of LNG tankers on bay bridges, on land traffic that would be affect-

ed by bridge closings, and on the general population by various aspects of the LNG operation out of Fall River. Kennedy also emphasized the tanker impact on the underwater training grounds of the U.S. Navy in the bay. "There is no way to justify why our Navy cannot use the full range of the bay for its training. In addition to the impact on the training zone, it is not in the best interests of the state," he stressed.

Kennedy said Cummings' observations and commitment for appropriate evaluations are invaluable. "What he saw, and what we gain, is more than just reading a memo," he added.

Kennedy has long opposed the Fall River terminal. He reported he is working with Cummings and other legislators to create safety guidelines that would prevent LNG tankers in Narragansett Bay and other populous areas that would be threatened and disrupted. He said he expects other LNG proposals, already submitted or expected soon, will be able to provide the energy without the negative impacts represented by the Fall River plans.

America has five operating LNG installations, and 23 approved plans, including Fall River. Of the 23 plans approved by the Federal Energy Regulation Commission (FERC), four also have been approved by the Coast Guard, including two offshore of Boston. There are also 17 pending plans, including six off-shore proposals, as of May, according to FERC.

According to industry sources, at least 11 LNG plans have been cancelled in the past few years because of various marketing and regulatory decisions.

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