

# APPENDIX XI

UNITED STATES SENATE COMMITTEE ON

ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-5150

March 28 1995

The Honorable Charles A. Bowsher  
Comptroller General of the United States  
U.S. General Accounting Office  
Washington D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Bowsher:

The General Accounting Office (GAO) is currently working on a report concerning the national requirement for an Arctic Research Vessel (ARV), and we know that your analysts have reviewed various options concerning the acquisition of such a vessel. In the course of this review, it is important that the GAO consider alternative "constellations" of icebreakers that could be employed to satisfy the nation's Arctic research and Coast Guard missions in the most cost effective manner possible.

The nation currently has three icebreakers: Coast Guard vessels Polar Sea and Polar Star, and the National Science Foundation's Antarctic research vessel Palmer. The Coast Guard has contracted to build Healy, a fourth icebreaker. The proposed ARV would constitute a fifth icebreaker. Fiscal Limitations and other factors might easily lead the GAO to conclude that the ARV is not needed, but we believe that further analysis to explore the costs of operations and upgrades to ships in the existing icebreaker fleet is needed to guide our deliberations in this matter.

Indeed, some initial analyses made available to us from members of the scientific community indicate that the retirement of one of the Polar class vessels combined with the construction of the ARV could provide more scientific capability at a lower cost.. Given our long interest in Arctic research, and the interest of the Committee in ensuring that the best scientific information is available to assist in the responsible development of Arctic resources and protection of the Arctic environment, we request that these factors be included in the GAO's evaluation of this matter. Should your staff questions or require additional information, our staff contact are David Garman of the Committee staff (224-7933) and Michael Gougisha of Senator Johnston's staff (224-5824).

Sincerely,

J. Bennett Johnston  
Ranking Minority

Frank M. Murkowski  
Member Chairman

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