

NOTICE FOR FILING AGENCY PROTESTS

United States Coast Guard Ombudsman Program

It is the policy of the United States Coast Guard (USCG) to issue solicitations and make contract awards in a fair and timely manner. The Ombudsman Program for Agency Protests (OPAP) was established to investigate agency protest issues and resolve them without expensive and time-consuming litigation. OPAP is an independent reviewing authority that is empowered to grant a prevailing protester essentially the same relief as the Government Accountability Office (GAO).

Interested parties are encouraged to seek resolution of their concerns within the USCG as an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) forum rather than filing a protest with the GAO or some external forum. Interested parties may seek resolution of their concerns informally or opt to file a formal agency protest with the Contracting Officer or Ombudsman.

Informal Forum with the Ombudsman. Interested parties who believe a specific USCG procurement is unfair or otherwise defective should first direct their concerns to the applicable Contracting Officer. If the Contracting Officer is unable to satisfy their concerns, interested parties are encouraged to contact the U.S. Coast Guard Ombudsman for Agency Protests. Under this informal process the agency is not required to suspend contract award performance. Use of an informal forum does not suspend any time requirement for filing a protest with the agency or other forum. In order to ensure a timely response, interested parties should provide the following information to the Ombudsman: solicitation/contract number, contracting office, Contracting Officer, and solicitation closing date (if applicable).

Formal Agency Protest with the Ombudsman. Prior to submitting a formal agency protest, protesters must first use their best efforts to resolve their concerns with the Contracting Officer through open and frank discussions. If the protester's concerns are unresolved, an Independent Review is available by the Ombudsman. The protester may file a formal agency protest to either the Contracting Officer or as an alternative to that, the Ombudsman under the OPAP program. Contract award or performance will be suspended during the protest period unless contract award or performance is justified, in writing, for urgent and compelling reasons or is determined in writing to be in the best interest of the government. The agency's goal is to resolve protests in less than 35 calendar days from the date of filing. Protests shall include the information set forth in [FAR 33.103\(d\)\(2\)](#). If the protester fails to submit the required information, resolution of the protest may be delayed or the protest may be dismissed. To be timely protests must be filed within the period specified in [FAR 33.103\(e\)](#). Formal protests filed under the OPAP program should be submitted electronically to OPAP@uscg.mil and the Contracting Officer or by hand delivery to the Contracting Officer.

Election of Forum. After an interested party protests a Coast Guard procurement to the Contracting Officer or the Ombudsman, and while the protest is pending, the protester agrees not to file a protest with the GAO or other external forum. If the protest is filed with an external forum, the agency protest will be dismissed.

- **Ombudsman Hotline: (202) 475-5786**