



United States Lifesaving Association

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www.usla.org

SUBJECT: Congressional Co-Sponsorship Support for House Concurrent Resolution 27

Recognizing Open Water Lifeguards as First Responders

Dear Members of Congress,

On behalf of the United States Lifesaving Association (USLA), I respectfully request your support as a co-sponsor of House Concurrent Resolution 27, which recognizes open water lifeguards as First Responders and Emergency Response Providers (ERPs). This bipartisan resolution has been referred to the Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management.

About the USLA

The USLA is the premier national organization representing open water lifeguards across the United States. Our member agencies safeguard millions of beachgoers at ocean, gulf, and inland waters each year. The USLA sets national training standards, certifies qualifying lifeguard agencies, and publishes the *Open Water Lifesaving Manual*, widely regarded as the benchmark for professional lifeguard training.

Why It Matters

Open water lifeguards carry out first responder duties every day. They prevent injuries, respond to life-threatening emergencies, provide first aid, assist EMS and fire personnel, and conduct rescues—often in unpredictable and hazardous environments. However, they are not uniformly recognized as First Responders at the federal level.

By formally recognizing open water lifeguards as First Responders/ERPs through H. Con. Res. 27, Congress would ensure:

- **Clarity in federal law** that affirms the essential emergency role of lifeguards;
- **Consistency in emergency planning and response protocols**, including vaccination prioritization and eligibility for benefits;
- **Recognition of the vital role lifeguards play** in saving lives and protecting public safety on our nation's coastlines and inland waterways.

Legal Foundation

Current federal law already supports the classification of open water lifeguards as Emergency Response Providers:

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Dr. Peter Wernicki
Medical Advisor

John "Chip" More
Legal Advisor

- 6 U.S.C. § 101(6) includes "related personnel agencies and authorities" as part of its ERP definition.
- 42 U.S.C. § 300ff-133(a) defines Emergency Response Employees by function—responding to, treating, assisting, or transporting victims.
- The Homeland Security Act of 2002 defines First Responders as individuals responsible for life preservation during the early stages of an incident.

These laws emphasize duties over job titles. Lifeguards—many of whom are cross-trained in EMS, marine firefighting, and law enforcement—clearly meet the functional criteria.

Closing

This resolution does not alter or limit any existing benefits for public safety officers or their families. Rather, it affirms what communities and emergency agencies already know to be true: that open water lifeguards are essential first responders.

We thank you for your time and consideration. Please contact us if we may provide any additional information or support in moving this resolution forward.

Respectfully,



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