

# PRESS RELEASE

Contact: Captain Richard A. Block – (985) 851-2134; Eric N. Shine (714) 362-7491  
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## COAST GUARD ABUSES ITS AUTHORITY TO SILENCE A WHISTLEBLOWER

Last summer Robert Little, an investigative reporter for the *Baltimore Sun* exposed a public scandal with the Coast Guard's Administrative Law Judges (ALJs). A Congressional Hearing held on July 31, 2007 presided over by Rep. Elijah Cummings (D. Md.), Chairman of the House Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Subcommittee, focused on the "appearance of impropriety" at the highest levels of the Coast Guard. H.R. 2830, recently passed overwhelmingly by the House of Representatives on a 395 to 7 vote, would transfer the ALJ system from the Coast Guard to the National Transportation Safety Board.

Transferring the ALJs, however, is far from a "done deal," however. In the meantime, the same Judge, Walter J. Brudzinski who was exposed by another judge for refusing to rule against the Coast Guard for fear of losing his job, is pursuing the Coast Guard's vendetta to destroy and silence a merchant marine officer, Eric Shine. Shine went to great lengths and considerable personal risk to expose pollution and other misdeeds that Coast Guard officers and shipping companies preferred to ignore.

Eric Shine, a U.S. Merchant Marine Academy graduate engineer, lost all he ever had in an ongoing battle with Coast Guard officials – his health, his home, his job, and even his father. Nevertheless, he continues to fight because he hasn't lost his voice. He knows continuing this struggle is not about him, but it is about the rights of every single citizen of this country, to protect their rights and freedoms – if necessary against their own government! All Americans are supposed to be entitled to "due process," but Eric Shine has not been accorded these rights. The U.S. Coast Guard is prosecuting Eric Shine on the grounds he is incompetent and depressed. They expanded their limited authority to suspend or revoke his license to drag him before an Administrative Law Judge where he must serve as his own lawyer. The Coast Guard clearly plans to win at any cost so Shine will no longer speak out on radio and television and cause the agency further embarrassment.

The National Mariners Association (NMA), a national organization that represents merchant mariners, believes that Eric Shine deserves to be furnished with legal counsel for proper and effective representation and deserves public support in an unfair and one-sided struggle. NMA reviewed over 1,500 pages of transcripts and legal documents before taking a stand and reporting at length on this issue on our website [www.nationalmariners.org](http://www.nationalmariners.org) in our Report #R-429-L, Rev. 1. The Coast Guard Hates Whistleblowers: The Eric Shine Story.

Mr. Shine's hearing is open to the public. NMA encourage concerned citizens to attend the hearing on May 20, 2008 at 9:30 AM in the Glen Anderson Federal Building, 501 W. Ocean Blvd, Room 5150, Long Beach, CA 90802.

Background information attachments:

- [Report #R-429-L, Rev. 1.](#) (Series). March 12, 2008. The Coast Guard Hates Whistleblowers: The Eric Shine Story. 9p.
- Report #R-429-K. Aug. 8, 2007. Congressional Subcommittee Hears About Coast Guard Abuse of the Administrative Law System. [Report on Congressional Hearing held July 31, 2007] 52p
- [Report #R-429](#), Aug. 29, 2006. GCMA Report to Congress: How Coast Guard Investigations Adversely Affect Lower Level Mariners. 33p