A letter of appreciation from Walter J. Brudzinski, Chief Administrative Law Judge, USCG:

“I want to thank you and your staff at the Baltimore Civil Rights Zone Office for conducting Civil Rights Awareness/Anti-Harassment training [for] the Office of the Chief Administrative Law Judge (CG-00J).

“Your staff’s swift action saved substantial time and resources in connection with live (in person) training. The Civil Rights Directorate extends great support to the U.S. Coast Guard and clearly demonstrates it is Ready, Relevant, and Responsive.”

Complaints Corner: Timeliness Matters

In a recent case, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) upheld a decision by the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) in which the agency dismissed an employee’s complaint because it was not initiated within the allowed timeframe. The employee alleged that he was subjected to unlawful discrimination due to his race and color when he was not selected for a supervisory position. The agency dismissed the complaint for failure to timely initiate the pre-complaint process within 45-calendar days.

The employee argued that he was not aware that he was subjected to discrimination until the agency responded to his Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request which provided details about the selection. He argued that only upon receiving the agency’s response to the FOIA did he learn that the selectee was of a different race and color, and had scored lower than he had in the selection process. To determine when the 45-calendar days requirement is triggered, EEOC adopted a reasonable suspicion standard. Based on this theory, the time limitation is not triggered until a complainant reasonably suspects discrimination. The EEOC found that when the employee requested information about the selection through FOIA, he must have had reason to suspect discrimination, and therefore should have initiated the EEO complaint at that time. If you have questions pertaining to the Coast Guard’s EEO complaint process or timeframes, please contact your local Civil Rights Service Provider at (888) 992-7387.

Nominations for Coast Guard Civil Rights Senior Leader Awards are now open until 30 November 2018. To learn more, see ALCOAST 372/18.
**A Coastie is Recognized for Excellence In Service**

On 13 September 2018, Ms. Karen Gonzalez, Construction Manager, Civil Engineering Unit, Miami, FL, was honored with the 2018 National Image Meritorious (IMAGE) Service Award at the organization’s annual conference, during its Salute to the Military Dinner in Kansas City, MO. Mr. Miguel J. Avilés-Pérez, Chief, Office of Diversity and Inclusion, USCG, served as the Keynote Speaker at the event. Ms. Veronica Vasquez, President of the National IMAGE, Inc. presented the award. Pictured (left to right) Mr. Miguel J. Avilés-Pérez; Ms. Karen Gonzalez; and Ms. Veronica Vasquez. By Mr. Juan Torres, CRD, USCG HQ

**Hispanic American Military Service Members Recognized at Heritage Month Events**

During National Hispanic Heritage Month, Base Elizabeth City Special Emphasis Program Committee, sponsored an event to recognize Hispanic American military members past and present who serve our Nation. The life and legacy of Lance Corporal Jose F. Jimenez who died in the line of duty was highlighted. Mr. Donald Swanger, USCG (Ret.) was the keynote speaker (pictured right). Connecting to the theme “One Endless Voice to Enhance our Traditions,” Mr. Swanger shared the emotional story of how in the Summer of 1969, he was a Marine fighting alongside Lance Corporal Jimenez in the Vietnam War. Lance Corporal Jimenez earned the Medal of Honor for his heroic sacrifice. By LTJG Townshend Hirst, CRD, Region 2

Also, in celebration of Hispanic heritage, Coast Guard Base Portsmouth, Sector Hampton Roads, and Command Control and Engineering Center (C3Cen) Leadership, Diversity, and Advisory Councils (LDAC) jointly hosted a program. The keynote speakers were Commander José E. Diaz, CG District Five Chief of Enforcement and Lieutenant Carlos Ortega-Pérez, C3Cen Training Branch Chief. They shared their life experiences centered around family and; and their personal journeys from humble beginnings from Puerto Rico to becoming successful Coast Guard Commissioned Officers. LT Ortega-Pérez highlighted his heritage with a video displaying the extraordinary service of the 65th Infantry Regiment, known as the Borinqueneers, an all Puerto Rican regiment of the United States Army who fought with valor during the Korean War. Attendees enjoyed the presentations, displays of proud Hispanic military service, and cuisine from Taste of Brazil. Pictured (left to right) CDR José E. Diaz; and LT Carlos Ortega-Pérez. By MSTC Travis White, CRD, Region 2

**Students Salute a Greener Future**

K. Karolina, a 12th grader at Marine Academy of Science and Technology, Highlands, NJ was the 6-12 category contest winner for the K-12 Annual Student Art Contest. The K-5 category winner was A. Tarikka, a 5th grader at Milestone River School, Plainsboro Township, NJ. This year’s theme was “Better Shipping for a Better Future.” Coast Guard PIE students were among the contestants. The artwork of the winners and finalists will be featured in a commemorative bilingual 2019 calendar. To see additional artwork of the students, please visit https://namepa.net/education/art-contest/. By Ms. Gwendolyn White, CRD, USCG HQ

**New Member Joins Team CRD**

The Civil Rights Directorate (CRD) welcomes Ms. Bianca Bell as the Informal Complaints Manager in the Solutions and Complaints Division, HQ. She comes to the Coast Guard from the U.S. Transportation Security Administration where she served as an Equal Employment Specialist. Ms. Bell attained a law degree from Howard University and a degree in business administration from University of North Carolina. She is a Washingtonian and a member of the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. Ms. Bell enjoys traveling, visiting museums, art exhibits, and attending music festivals. By Mr. Eduardo Zayas, CRD, USCG HQ

For information about Personal Assistance Services for employees with disabilities, go to Frequently Asked Questions at https://www.uscg.mil/Family/Civil-Rights/faq/