

Coast Guard budget would fund second new icebreaker

By Sarah Cammarata

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The Coast Guard is asking Congress for \$555 million for a second heavy polar icebreaker under the new budget request released Monday.

As part of the Department of Homeland Security's \$49.7 billion [budget request](#), the Coast Guard would receive \$12.3 billion for fiscal 2021 — practically unchanged from last year's enacted funding level at \$12.2 billion.

The purchase of the icebreaker is part of the service's drive to rebuild its polar fleet. [VT Halter Marine Inc. was awarded \\$745 million in 2019](#) to design and begin building six icebreakers (three heavy and three medium ships).

The budget would pay for a \$15 million “multi-year service life extension project” for the Polar Star, the only operational heavy icebreaker in the U.S.

Lawrence Korb, senior fellow for the Center for American Progress, said the Coast Guard, “kind of gets lost in the shuffle,” especially with its motto “to do more with less.” Korb said the Coast Guard needs more icebreakers, which average 40-years-old, particularly as rising temperatures melt more ice, opening new channels for commercial and military use.

The service welcomed new 360-foot offshore patrol cutters last year that replaced some 50-year-old vessels.

The budget would provide funds for construction of a third vessel, and funds to procure long-lead-time materials for a fourth hull. Funding for those ships would get a slight boost in fiscal year 2021, up from \$312,000 to \$546,000.

[The Coast Guard has faced steep cuts](#) by the administration [to help U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement construct](#) President Donald Trump's border wall and divert money to other agencies.