

## “Diversity: the art of thinking independently together”

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What is Diversity? Before we define what diversity is, we must establish what diversity IS NOT. Diversity IS NOT about discrimination. Discrimination involves violating the law – and people’s own dignity. Diversity is about being **PROACTIVE** in building a team of different personalities, backgrounds and perspectives who share the same vision towards our mission and work. The National Commodore’s official policy states that “It is the policy of the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary to ensure that all citizens, regardless **of race, gender, color, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, age, religion, or physical or mental disability** have an equal opportunity to become a volunteer of this organization” (**paraphrased**). It is after all, part of our mission to become the volunteer organization of choice.

Embracing the diversity of thoughts, ideas, and competencies of our people, keeps the Auxiliary strong and empowers us to mission readiness and excellence. Diversity is an imperative to the Auxiliary; it can increase morale and impact our success. In essence **every member** is responsible for fostering an inclusive team atmosphere and being a contributing part of Team Coast Guard. The Auxiliary is committed to creating a diverse and inclusive environment, a journey guided by the deeply held values of Honor, Respect, and Devotion to Duty, as America's Guardians, we understand that diversity is not a problem to be solved, but is an asset to be developed.

Being culturally aware provides an opportunity to stand back and consider that there are certain backgrounds, personal values, beliefs and upbringings that shape the things we all do. Something that is considered inappropriate behavior in one culture may be perfectly appropriate in another. Learning about other cultures helps us relate to one another and opens us up to different perspectives or ideas. I challenge you to find difference to embrace the diversity of those around you. If your flotilla would like a briefing at your next meeting please email Margaret Butler at [DiversitySODiv-23.5SR@usa.com](mailto:DiversitySODiv-23.5SR@usa.com) for more information.