Navy Ship Names: Background for Congress

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Summary

Names for Navy ships traditionally have been chosen and announced by the Secretary of the Navy, under the direction of the President and in accordance with rules prescribed by Congress. Rules for giving certain types of names to certain types of Navy ships have evolved over time. There have been exceptions to the Navy’s ship-naming rules, particularly for the purpose of naming a ship for a person when the rule for that type of ship would have called for it to be named for something else. Some observers in recent years have perceived a breakdown in, or corruption of, the rules for naming Navy ships.

The 10 most recently named aircraft carriers have been named for U.S. presidents (8 ships) and Members of Congress (2 ships). Virginia (SSN-774) class attack submarines are being named for states. An exception occurred on January 8, 2009, when the Secretary of the Navy announced that SSN-785, the 12th ship in the class, would be named for former Senator John Warner. Destroyers are named for U.S. naval leaders and heroes. Littoral Combat Ships (LCSs) are being named for small and medium-sized cities. San Antonio (LPD-17) class amphibious ships are being named for U.S. cities. An exception occurred on April 23, 2010, when the Secretary of the Navy announced that LPD-26, the 10th ship in the class, would be named for the late Representative John P. Murtha. The Navy announced on June 27, 2008, that the first LHA-6 class amphibious assault ship would be named America, a name previously used for an aircraft carrier (CV-66) that served in the Navy from 1965 to 1996. Lewis and Clark (TAKE-1) class cargo and ammunition ships are being named for noted explorers and pioneers of various kinds. Joint High Speed Vessels (JHSV) are being named for American traits and values. An exception has occurred with JHSV-4, the Navy’s second JHSV (JHSV 1 and 3 are to be operated by the Army), which the Secretary of the Navy announced on March 25, 2010, was being named Fall River. Fall River is a city in Massachusetts that is the location of Battleship Cove, a maritime museum and war memorial with several deactivated warships, including a post-World War II cruiser named Fall River.

The Navy historically has only rarely named ships for living persons. At least 11 U.S. military ships since the 1970s have been named for persons who were living at the time the name was announced.

Members of the public are sometimes interested in having Navy ships named for their own states or cities, for older U.S. Navy ships (particularly those on which they or their relatives served), for battles in which they or their relatives participated, or for people they admire. Citizens with such an interest sometimes contact the Navy, the Department of Defense, or Congress seeking support for their proposals.

Congress has long maintained an interest in how Navy ships are named, and has influenced the naming of certain Navy ships. The Navy suggests that congressional offices wishing to express support for proposals to name a Navy ship for a specific person, place, or thing contact the office of the Secretary of the Navy to make their support known. Congress may also pass legislation relating to ship names. Measures passed by Congress in recent years regarding Navy ship names have all been sense-of-the-Congress provisions. In the 111th Congress, H.Con.Res. 83 would express the sense of the Congress that that a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, either CVN-79 or CVN-80, should be named for former Senator Barry M. Goldwater, and H.Res. 330 would express the sense of the House of Representatives that the Secretary of the Navy should name an appropriate Navy ship in honor of Marine Corps General Clifton B. Cates of Tiptonville, TN. Section 1022 of the FY2010 defense authorization act (H.R. 2647/P.L. 111-84 of October 28, 2009) designated the historic Navy ship USS Constitution as “America’s Ship of State.”
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Background

Authority for Naming Ships

Names for Navy ships traditionally have been chosen and announced by the Secretary of the Navy, under the direction of the President and in accordance with rules prescribed by Congress. For most of the 19th century, U.S. law included language explicitly assigning the Secretary of the Navy the task of naming new Navy ships. The reference to the Secretary of the Navy disappeared from the U.S. Code in 1925. The Code today (10 USC §7292) is silent on the issue of who has the authority to name new Navy ships, but the Secretary of the Navy arguably retains implicit authority, given the location of §7292 in subtitle C of Title 10, which covers the Navy and Marine Corps.

Navy’s Process for Selecting Names

In discussing its name-selection process, the Navy cites the above-mentioned laws and states:

As with many other things, the procedures and practices involved in Navy ship naming are as much, if not more, products of evolution and tradition than of legislation. As we have seen, the names for new ships are personally decided by the Secretary of the Navy. The Secretary can rely on many sources to help him reach his decisions. Each year, the Naval Historical Center compiles primary and alternate ship name recommendations and forwards these to the Chief of Naval Operations by way of the chain of command. These recommendations are the result of research into the history of the Navy and by suggestions submitted by service members, Navy veterans, and the public. Ship name source records at the Historical Center reflect the wide variety of name sources that have been used in the past, particularly since World War I. Ship recommendations are conditioned by such factors as the name

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1 A law approved in 1819 (Res. of March 3, 1819, §1, 3 Stat. 538, No. 7) stated “That all of the ships of the navy of the United States, now building, or hereafter to be built, shall be named by the Secretary of the Navy, under the direction of the President of the United States” in accordance with rules specifying that ships of the first class were to be named after states of the Union, and second and third class ships were to be named, respectively, after rivers and principal cities and towns. A law approved in 1858 (Act of June 12, 1858, c. 153, §5, 11 Stat. 319) provided a similar rule for “steamships of the navy,” except that third-class vessels (those with fewer than twenty guns) were to be named by the Secretary of the Navy as the President may direct, taking care that no two vessels in the Navy shall bear the same name.” Section 1531 of the Revised Statutes of 1873-1874, citing the 1819 and 1858 laws, states: “The vessels of the Navy shall be named by the Secretary of the Navy, under the direction of the President” in accordance with rules similar to those above, varying slightly depending on whether the vessel was a sailing ship or a steamship. In 1898, Congress passed a law (Act of May 4, 1898, c. 234, 30 Stat. 390 [appropriations for the naval services]) prescribing rules for the naming of “first-class battle ships and monitors,” which specified that these were to be named after States and “shall not be named for any city, place, or persons until the names of the States, shall have been exhausted.” The provision did not explicitly state whose duty it would be to assign names to vessels. Congress repealed this provision in 1908 as it pertained to monitors, permitting those vessels to be named “as the President may direct.” (Act of May 13, 1908, c. 166, 35 Stat. 159.)

2 The reference to the Secretary of the Navy found in §1531 of the Revised Statutes of 1873-1874 (see previous footnote) is absent from the U.S. Code of 1925, which covers Navy vessel names in Title 34, §461-463.

3 34 USC §461-463 of the 1925 U.S. Code (see previous footnote) were later recodified as 10 USC §7292. 10 USC §7292 provides that battleships are to be “named for a State. However, if the names of all the States are in use, a battleship may be named for a city, place, or person.” It specifically authorizes the Secretary of the Navy to “change the name of any vessel bought for the Navy,” §7292(c), but does not explicitly assign responsibility for ensuring that no two vessels have the same name, §7292(a), or for naming battleships, §7292(b).
categories for ship types now being built, as approved by the Secretary of the Navy; the distribution of geographic names of ships of the Fleet; names borne by previous ships which distinguished themselves in service; names recommended by individuals and groups; and names of naval leaders, national figures, and deceased members of the Navy and Marine Corps who have been honored for heroism in war or for extraordinary achievement in peace.

In its final form, after consideration at the various levels of command, the Chief of Naval Operations signs the memorandum recommending names for the current year’s building program and sends it to the Secretary of the Navy. The Secretary considers these nominations, along with others he receives as well as his own thoughts in this matter. At appropriate times, he selects names for specific ships and announces them.

While there is no set time for assigning a name, it is customarily done before the ship is christened.4

Naming Rules for Ship Types

Rules for giving certain types of names to certain types of Navy ships have evolved over time. Attack submarines, for example, were once named for fish, then later for cities, and most recently for states, while cruisers were once named for cities, then later for states, and most recently for battles. The Navy states that while it “has attempted to be systematic in naming its ships, like all institutions it has been subject to evolutionary change, and the name sources of the Navy’s ships have not been immune to this change.”5

There have been exceptions to the Navy’s ship-naming rules, particularly for the purpose of naming a ship for a person when the rule for that type of ship would have called for it to be named for something else.6 Some observers in recent years have perceived a breakdown in, or corruption of, the rules for naming Navy ships.7 For example, the three-ship Seawolf (SSN-21) class of attack submarines—Seawolf (SSN-21), Connecticut (SSN-22), and Jimmy Carter (SSN-23)—were named for a fish, a state, and a president, respectively, reflecting no apparent rule.

For ship types now being procured for the Navy, current naming practices can be summarized as follows:

- Eleven of the 12 most recently named aircraft carriers (those with hull numbers 67 through 79) have been named for U.S. presidents (9 ships) and Members of Congress (2 ships). The most recent carrier that was not named for a president or

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5 Ibid.

6 Ohio (SSBN-726) class ballistic missile submarines, for example, were named for states, but one (SSBN-730) was named for Senator Henry “Scoop” Jackson of Washington, who died in office in 1983. Los Angeles (SSN-688) class attack submarines were named for cities, but one (SSN-709) was named for Admiral Hyman G. Rickover, the longtime director of the Navy’s nuclear propulsion program. Ticonderoga (CG-47) class cruisers were named for battles, but one (CG-51) was named for Thomas S. Gates, a former Secretary of the Navy and Secretary of Defense.

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Member of Congress was the second of these 12 carriers, Nimitz (CVN-68), which was procured in FY1967.8

- **Virginia (SSN-774) class attack submarines** are being named for states. An exception occurred on January 8, 2009, when then-Secretary of the Navy Donald Winter announced that SSN-785, the 12th ship in the class, would be named for former Senator John Warner.9

- **Destroyers** are traditionally named for U.S. naval leaders and heroes. The Navy is currently procuring Arleigh Burke (DDG-51) class destroyers. The Navy in FY2007-FY2009 also procured three DDG-1000 class destroyers. The first DDG-1000 was named for Admiral Elmo R. “Bud” Zumwalt, Jr., who was the Chief of Naval Operations from 1970 to 1974. On October 29, 2008, the Navy announced that the second DDG-1000 would be named for Michael Monsoor, a Navy SEAL (i.e., a member of the Navy’s special operations force) who was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for his heroic actions in Iraq in September 2006.

- **Littoral Combat Ships (LCSs)** are being named for small and medium-sized cities. The Navy has named the first two LCSs Freedom and Independence, after multiple U.S. cities with these names. The third and fourth ships have been named Fort Worth and Coronado.

- **San Antonio (LPD-17) class amphibious ships** are being named for U.S. cities. An exception occurred on April 23, 2010, when the Secretary of the Navy announced that LPD-26, the 10th ship in the class, would be named for the late Representative John P. Murtha.10 The Secretary’s decision to name the ship for

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8 CVN-68 was named for Fleet Admiral Chester Nimitz, a five-star admiral who commanded U.S. and allied forces in the Pacific in World War II. Nimitz died in 1966, the same year that Congress considered the FY1967 defense budget that funded the procurement of CVN-68.

9 Warner served as a sailor in World War II, as a Marine in the Korean War, as Under Secretary of the Navy in 1969-1972, and as Secretary of the Navy in 1972-1974. Warner served as a Senator from January 2, 1979, to January 3, 2009. He was a longtime member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, and was for several years the chairman of that committee.

Winter’s January 8, 2009, announcement assigned a name to SSN-785 eleven months before the ship was fully funded. (The ship was fully funded by the FY2010 DOD appropriations act [H.R. 3326/P.L. 111-118], which was signed into law on December 19, 2009.) Naming a ship almost a year before it is funded is unusual. Winter stepped down as Secretary of the Navy on March 13, 2009. If SSN-785 had not been named for Warner, the 11th Congress might have had an opportunity to consider whether CVN-79, the next Ford-class carrier, should be named for Warner. One author has argued that in light of Warner’s record and past traditions for naming Navy ships, “he should be honored by an aircraft carrier (two CVNs [nuclear-powered aircraft carriers] have been named for members of Congress) or possibly the lead ship for the planned class of CG(X) cruisers – but not a submarine.” (Norman Polmar, “Misnaming Navy Ships (Again),” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, February 2009: 89.)

The Navy may have named SSN-785 for Warner – LHA-6 for America – in part so that the Navy could give CVN-79 a different name, such as Enterprise. The current Enterprise (CVN-65) is scheduled to retire in 2012, and CVN-79 is scheduled to be procured in FY2013. CVN-65 is the eighth American naval fighting ship to be named Enterprise; earlier ships by that name date back to the Revolutionary War. (See, for example, the Naval History & Heritage Command’s Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships, available online at http://www.history.navy.mil/DANFS/index.html.)

10 “Navy Names Amphibious Ship for Congressman John Murtha,” *Navy News Service*, April 23, 2010. Murtha served in the Marine Corps in from 1952 to 1955, and again from 1966 to 1967. During the second of these two periods, he served in the Vietnam War, receiving multiple decorations, including the Bronze Star with a Combat “V” for valor and two Purple Hearts. He served in the Marine Corps Reserve from 1955 to 1966, and again from 1967 to 1990, retiring as a Colonel. He was the first Vietnam War combat veteran to be elected to the House of Representatives. He served as (continued...)
Representative Murtha was first reported on April 13, based on a memorandum from the Secretary of the Navy dated April 9.\footnote{Philip Ewing, “Navy To Name LPD 26 For Rep. John Murtha,” \textit{NavyTimes.com}, April 13, 2010.}

- The Navy announced on June 27, 2008, that the first \textbf{LHA-6 class amphibious assault ship} would be named America, a name previously used for an aircraft carrier (CV-66) that served in the Navy from 1965 to 1996. The previous eight Wasp (LHD-1) class big deck amphibious assault ships were named for World War II-era Navy aircraft carriers and earlier Navy ships.

- \textbf{Lewis and Clark (TAKE-1) class cargo and ammunition ships} are being named for noted explorers and pioneers of various kinds. The Navy announced on October 9, 2009, that the 13\textsuperscript{th} ship in the class would be named for the civil rights activist Medgar Evers.\footnote{“Navy Names Ship After Civil Rights Activist Medgar Evers,” \textit{Navy News Service}, October 9, 2009.}

- \textbf{Joint High Speed Vessels (JHSVs)}, which are being procured for both the Navy and Army, are being named for American traits and values.\footnote{Source: Navy Office of Legislative Affairs, in a telephone call to CRS following the July 16, 2009, naming announcement for JHSVs 1 through 3.} On July 16, 2009, the Secretary of the Navy and the Secretary of the Army announced that the first three JHSVs had been named Fortitude (JHSV-1), Vigilant (JHSV-2), and Spearhead (JHSV-3). JHSVs 1 and 3 are to be operated by the Army; JHSV-2 is to be operated by the Navy.\footnote{“Navy, Army Name First Three Joint High Speed Vessels,” \textit{Navy News Service}, July 16, 2009; Christopher P. Cavas, “Independence Shows Its Moves,” \textit{Defense News}, July 20, 2009: 3. JHSVs are intended for fast intra-theater transportation of troops, vehicles, and equipment, and are being procured for the Army and Navy through the Navy’s shipbuilding account.} An exception to the naming rule for this class has occurred with JHSV-4, the Navy’s second JHSV, which the Secretary of the Navy announced on March 25, 2010, was being named Fall River.\footnote{Kevin S. O’Brien, “Secretary Names JHSV, Meets with Vets and Students,” \textit{Navy News Service}, March 26, 2010.} Fall River is a city in Massachusetts that is the location of Battleship Cove, a maritime museum and war memorial with several deactivated warships, including a post-World War II cruiser named Fall River.

\section*{Ships Named for Living Persons}

The Navy historically has only rarely named ships for living persons. As shown in \textbf{Table 1}, at least 11 U.S. military ships since the 1970s have been named for persons who were living at the time the name was announced.

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|}
\hline
Name & Class/Type of Ship \\
\hline
John C. Stennis & Nimitz-class aircraft carrier \\
\hline
Jacob Riis & Wasp-class amphibious transport dock \\
\hline
John F. Kennedy & Kennedy-class aircraft carrier \\
\hline
Richard E. Byrd & Lewis-class replenishment oiler \\
\hline
Ellen O’Meara & Lewis-class replenishment oiler \\
\hline
Richard E. Byrd & Lewis-class replenishment oiler \\
\hline
T. R. Maddox & Oliver Hazard Perry-class guided missile frigate \\
\hline
John S. McCain & John S. McCain-class guided missile destroyer \\
\hline
William P. Driscoll & Lewis-class replenishment oiler \\
\hline
Matthew P.apyrus & Lewis-class replenishment oiler \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{U.S. Military Ships Named for Living Persons}
\end{table}

(...continued)
### Public’s Role in Naming Ships

Members of the public are sometimes interested in having Navy ships named for their own states or cities, for older U.S. Navy ships (particularly those on which they or their relatives served), for battles in which they or their relatives participated, or for people they admire. Citizens with such an interest sometimes contact the Navy, the Department of Defense, or Congress seeking support for their proposals. An October 2008 news report suggested that a letter-writing campaign by New Hampshire elementary school students that began in January 2004 was instrumental in the Navy’s decision in August 2004 to name a Virginia-class submarine after the state.16

### Congress’s Role in Naming Ships

Congress has long maintained an interest in how Navy ships are named,17 and has influenced the naming of certain Navy ships. For example, one source states that “[the aircraft carriers] CVN 72 and CVN 73 were named prior to their start [of construction], in part to preempt potential congressional pressure to name one of those ships for Admiral H.G. Rickover ([instead,] the [attack submarine] SSN 709 was named for the admiral).”18 Another example was a rivalry of

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17 For example, the 1819 and 1858 laws cited in footnote 1 set forth naming rules for certain kinds of ships. Today, 10 USC §7292(b) still requires that battleships (which the United States has not built since World War II) be named after states.

18 *The Naval Institute Guide to the Ships and Aircraft of the U.S. Fleet*, op cit, p. 113. See also p. 70 and p. 86.
sorts in Congress between those who supported naming the aircraft carrier CVN-76 for president Truman and those who supported naming it for president Reagan; the issue was effectively resolved by a decision announced by President Clinton in February 1995 to name one carrier (CVN-75) for Truman and another (CVN-76) for Reagan.\footnote{Patrick Pexton, “Clinton Compromise: Carriers Truman And Reagan,” \emph{Navy Times}, February 13, 1995: 19. See also “Navy Announces Aircraft Carrier To Be Named For President Truman,” \emph{Associated Press}, February 2, 1995. CVN-75 had been preliminarily named the United States.} One press report suggests that the decision to name CVN-77 for President George H.W. Bush may have been influenced by a congressional suggestion.\footnote{The article, which reported on the ship’s official naming ceremony, states: “[Senator] Warner recalled that he first suggested naming a carrier in the senior Bush’s honor last year [i.e., in 2001], during a ceremony in Newport News to christen the [previous] carrier Ronald Reagan.” (Dale Eisman, “Navy Names New Aircraft Carrier For Elder Bush,” \emph{Norfolk Virginian-Pilot}, December 10, 2002.)} Section 1012 of the FY2007 defense authorization act (H.R. 5122/P.L. 109-364 of October 17, 2006), expressed the sense of the Congress that the aircraft carrier CVN-78 should be named for President Gerald R. Ford, and the Navy announced on January 16, 2007, that CVN-78 would be so named.

In the 97th Congress, H.Con.Res. 312 expressed the sense of Congress that the Los Angeles (SSN-688) class attack submarine Corpus Christi (SSN-705) should be renamed, and that a nonlethal naval vessel should be named Corpus Christi. (Los Angeles-class attack submarines were named for cities, and SSN-705 had been named for Corpus Christi, TX.) H.Con.Res. 312 was introduced on April 21, 1982. On May 10, 1982, the Navy changed the name of SSN-705 to City of Corpus Christi.

The Navy suggests that congressional offices wishing to express support for proposals to name a Navy ship for a specific person, place, or thing contact the office of the Secretary of the Navy to make their support known. Congress may also pass legislation relating to ship names (see below).

**Past Legislation on Naming Ships**

\textbf{Table 2} shows recent enacted provisions regarding the names of Navy ships. All of these measures expressed the sense of the Congress about how a Navy ship should be named.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year</th>
<th>Public Law</th>
<th>Bill</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Ship</th>
<th>Name(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>P.L. 106-398</td>
<td>H.R. 4205</td>
<td>1012</td>
<td>CVN-77</td>
<td>Lexington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>P.L. 105-261</td>
<td>H.R. 3616</td>
<td>1014</td>
<td>an LPD-17 class ship</td>
<td>Clifton B. Cates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>P.L. 104-106</td>
<td>S. 1124</td>
<td>1018</td>
<td>LHD-7</td>
<td>Iwo Jima</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>P.L. 104-106</td>
<td>S. 1124</td>
<td>1018</td>
<td>LPD-17 class amphibious ships</td>
<td>Marine Corps battles or members of Marine Corps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>P.L. 104-106</td>
<td>S. 1124</td>
<td>1019</td>
<td>an appropriate ship</td>
<td>Joseph Vittori</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>P.L. 101-510</td>
<td>H.R. 4739</td>
<td>1426</td>
<td>the next DDG-51</td>
<td>Samuel S. Stratton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>P.L. 100-456</td>
<td>H.R. 4481</td>
<td>1221</td>
<td>the next SSBN</td>
<td>Melvin Price</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 shows examples of proposed bills and amendments regarding the names of Navy ships going back to the 93rd Congress. Some of these measures expressed the sense of the Congress about how a Navy ship should be named, while others would mandate a certain name for a ship. Although few of these measures were acted on after being referred to committee, they all signaled congressional interest in how certain ships should be named, and thus may have influenced Navy decisions on these matters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year</th>
<th>Public Law</th>
<th>Bill</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Ship Description</th>
<th>Name(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>P.L. 100-456</td>
<td>H.R. 4481</td>
<td>1222</td>
<td>an appropriate ship</td>
<td>Bob Hope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>P.L. 100-202</td>
<td>H.J.Res. 395</td>
<td>8138</td>
<td>CVN-74 or CVN-75</td>
<td>John C. Stennis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Prepared by CRS. All of these provisions expressed the sense of the Congress about how a Navy ship should be named.

**Table 3. Examples of Proposed Bills and Amendments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>[Congress] and Bill</th>
<th>Ship Description</th>
<th>Proposed name(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[111th] H.Res. 330</td>
<td>an appropriate ship</td>
<td>Clifton B. Cates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[111th] H.Con.Res. 83</td>
<td>CVN-79 or CVN-80</td>
<td>Barry M. Goldwater</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[107th] H.Con.Res. 294</td>
<td>a new naval vessel</td>
<td>Bluejacket</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[106th] S.Con.Res. 84</td>
<td>CVN-77</td>
<td>Lexington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[105th] S.Amdt. 2812 to S. 2057</td>
<td>LPD-17 class ship</td>
<td>Clifton B. Cates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[104th] H.J.Res. 61</td>
<td>CVN-76</td>
<td>Ronald Reagan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[104th] H.R. 445</td>
<td>CVN-76</td>
<td>Harry Truman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[104th] S.Amdt. 2277 to S. 1026</td>
<td>LHD-7</td>
<td>Iwo Jima</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[104th] S.Amdt. 2277 to S. 1026</td>
<td>LPD-17 class ships</td>
<td>famous Marine Corps battles or heroes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[104th] S.Amdt. 4350 to S. 1745</td>
<td>a SSN-774 class submarine</td>
<td>South Dakota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[103rd] H.R. 5283</td>
<td>an appropriate ship</td>
<td>Joseph Vittori</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[102nd] H.Con.Res. 354</td>
<td>a guided missile cruiser</td>
<td>Pearl Harbor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[102nd] H.R. 6115</td>
<td>CVN-76</td>
<td>Harry S Truman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[100th] H.Amdt. 614 to H.R. 4264</td>
<td>next SSBN-726 class submarine deployed after enactment</td>
<td>Melvin Price</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[100th] S.Amdt. 1354 to H.J.Res. 395</td>
<td>CVN-74 or CVN-75</td>
<td>John C. Stennis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[98th] H.Res. 99</td>
<td>an aircraft carrier</td>
<td>Wasp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[97th] H.Con.Res. 312</td>
<td>a nonlethal naval vessel</td>
<td>Corpus Christi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[97th] H.Res. 174</td>
<td>an aircraft carrier</td>
<td>Wasp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[97th] H.R. 4977</td>
<td>CVN-72</td>
<td>Hyman G. Rickover</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
[Congress] and Bill | Ship | Proposed name(s)
---|---|---
[93rd] H.Con.Res. 386 | CVN-70 | Carl Vinson
[93rd] H.J.Res. 831 | CVN-70 | Carl Vinson

Source: Prepared by CRS.

a. H.Con.Res. 312 expressed the sense of Congress that the Los Angeles (SSN-688) class attack submarine Corpus Christi (SSN-705) should be renamed, and that a nonlethal naval vessel should be named Corpus Christi. (Los Angeles-class attack submarines were named for cities, and SSN-705 had been named for Corpus Christi, TX.) H.Con.Res. 312 was introduced on April 21, 1982. On May 10, 1982, the Navy changed the name of SSN-705 to City of Corpus Christi.

Legislative Activity in the 111th Congress

H.Con.Res. 83 (Regarding Naming CVN-79 or CVN-80 for Barry Goldwater)

H.Con.Res. 83, introduced on March 26, 2010, would express the sense of the Congress that that a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, either CVN-79 or CVN-80, should be named for former Senator Barry M. Goldwater. The text of H.Con.Res. 83 states:

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of Congress that a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier of the Navy, either the aircraft carrier designated as CVN-79 or the aircraft carrier designated as CVN-80, should be named the U.S.S. Barry M. Goldwater.

Whereas Barry M. Goldwater served as a pilot in the United States Army Air Corps during World War II and was later a Major General in the Air Force Reserve;

Whereas Barry M. Goldwater was an avid pilot throughout his military career and after his retirement;

Whereas Barry M. Goldwater was instrumental in the desegregation of Phoenix schools, restaurants, and the Arizona National Guard;

Whereas Barry M. Goldwater was elected to the City Council in Phoenix in 1949, and served as a United States Senator from Arizona from 1953 to 1965 and again from 1969 to 1987;

Whereas throughout his tenure in Congress, Senator Goldwater was as avid a proponent of a strong national defense as he was a staunch opponent of communism and totalitarianism;

Whereas Senator Goldwater served as chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee and was responsible for the unanimous Senate passage of the Defense Department Reorganization Act of 1986, which streamlined command channels at the Pentagon;

Whereas Senator Goldwater was nominated by the Republican Party as a candidate for President of the United States in 1964;
Whereas Senator Goldwater memorably declared at the 1964 Republican Convention, ‘I would remind you that extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice. And let me remind you also that moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue’; and

Whereas Senator Barry M. Goldwater was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1986 by President Ronald Reagan: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That it is the sense of Congress that a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier of the Navy, either the aircraft carrier designated as CVN-79 or the aircraft carrier designated as CVN-80, should be named the U.S.S. Barry M. Goldwater.

H.Res. 330 (Regarding Naming a Navy Ship for Clifton B. Cates)

H.Res. 330, introduced on April 2, 2009, expresses the sense of the House of Representatives that the Secretary of the Navy should name an appropriate Navy ship in honor of Marine Corps General Clifton B. Cates of Tiptonville, TN. As shown in Table 2, Section 1014 of P.L. 105-261 (the FY1999 defense authorization act, which was signed into law on October 17, 1998) expressed the sense of Congress that a San Antonio (LPD-17) class amphibious ship should be named for General Cates. In the years since the enactment of this measure, the Navy has not named a ship for General Cates. The text of H.Res. 330 states:

RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the Secretary of the Navy should name an appropriate Navy ship in honor of Marine Corps General Clifton B. Cates of Tiptonville, Tennessee.

Whereas Clifton B. Cates of Tiptonville, Tennessee served as a United States Marine during World Wars I and II and the Korean War;

Whereas Clifton B. Cates entered the Marine Corps as a Second Lieutenant in 1917 at the beginning of World War I, during which he fought in the crucial Second Battle of the Marne;

Whereas during that fight, then-Lieutenant Cates was wounded and gassed but refused to be evacuated;

Whereas Clifton B. Cates was the most decorated Marine Corps Officer of World War I, having been awarded the Navy Cross, Army Distinguished Service Cross with Oak Leaf Cluster, Silver Star Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, Purple Heart Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, the Legion of Honor, and the Croix de Guerre with Gilt Star and 2 palms;

Whereas during World War II, Clifton B. Cates led Marines at Guadalcanal, and the seizure of Iwo Jima, and in recognition of his service was awarded the Legion of Merit with Combat ‘V’ and the Distinguished Service Medal with a gold star;

Whereas Clifton B. Cates was one of the few officers of any branch of the United States Armed Forces to command, under fire, a platoon, a company, a battalion, a regiment, and a division;

Whereas Clifton B. Cates was advanced to the rank of General in 1948 and was named the 19th Commandant of the United States Marine Corps;
Whereas Clifton B. Cates served his country as a United States Marine for 37 years through 3 wars; and

Whereas members of the Clifton Cates Memorial Fund led by retired Colonel Otto Melsa and Ed Youngblood have worked tirelessly to bring recognition to the significant accomplishments of General Clifton B. Cates: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That it is the sense of the House of Representatives that the Secretary of the Navy should name an appropriate Navy ship in honor of Marine Corps General Clifton B. Cates of Tiptonville, Tennessee.

H.Res. 1022 (Regarding Naming a Naval Ship for Medgar Evers)

H.Res. 1022, introduced on January 20, 2010, and passed by the House on February 4, 2010, honors the life and sacrifice of Medgar Evers, recognizes the important role Evers played in securing civil rights for all people in the United States; and congratulates the Navy for honoring Medgar Evers by naming a naval ship for him. H.Res. 1022 states:

Whereas Medgar Evers was born on July 2, 1925, in Decatur, Mississippi;

Whereas Mr. Evers was hired by Dr. Theodore Roosevelt Mason Howard to sell insurance for the Magnolia Mutual Life Insurance Company;

Whereas Mr. Evers was inducted into United States Army in 1943 and fought in the Battle of Normandy;

Whereas Dr. Howard, as President of the Regional Council of Negro Leadership, helped to introduce Mr. Evers to civil rights activism;

Whereas Mr. Evers applied to the then-segregated University of Mississippi School of Law in February 1954;

Whereas Mr. Evers’ application was rejected resulting in a National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) campaign to desegregate the school;

Whereas Mr. Evers was hired as a field secretary for the NAACP;

Whereas Mr. Evers was the target of a number of death threats as a result of his activism;

Whereas, on May 28, 1963, a Molotov cocktail was thrown into the carport of Mr. Evers’s home and 5 days before his death Mr. Evers was assaulted by a car outside of an NAACP office;

Whereas Mr. Evers was assassinated in the driveway of his home in Jackson after returning from a meeting with NAACP lawyers on June 12, 1963;

Whereas this assassination occurred just hours after President John F. Kennedy’s speech on national television in support of civil rights;

Whereas the death of Mr. Evers helped to prompt President John F. Kennedy to ask Congress for a comprehensive civil rights bill;
Whereas that bill, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, was signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson;

Whereas Mr. Evers' assassination has been memorialized in numerous popular songs, movies, and written pieces;

Whereas in 1969, Medgar Evers College was established in Brooklyn, New York, as part of the City University of New York;

Whereas, on June 28, 1992, the city of Jackson, Mississippi erected a statue in honor of Mr. Evers;

Whereas in December 2004, the Jackson City Council changed the name of the city's airport to Jackson-Evers International Airport; and

Whereas, on October 9, 2009, Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus announced that the United States Naval Ship (USNS) Medgar Evers (T-AKE-13), a Lewis and Clark-class dry cargo ship, will be named after Mr. Evers: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives--

(1) honors the life and sacrifice of Medgar Evers;

(2) recognizes the important role Mr. Evers played in securing civil rights for all people in the United States; and

(3) congratulates the United States Navy for honoring Medgar Evers by naming the United States Naval Ship Medgar Evers after him.


The FY2010 defense authorization act (H.R. 2647/P.L. 111-84 of October 28, 2009) does not include any provisions regarding the naming of Navy ships. Section 1022 of the act, however, designates the historic Navy ship USS Constitution as “America’s Ship of State.” Section 1022 states:

SEC. 1022. DESIGNATION OF U.S.S. CONSTITUTION AS AMERICA’S SHIP OF STATE.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress makes the following findings:

(1) In the Act entitled ‘‘An Act to Provide a Naval Armament’’, approved on March 27, 1794 (1 Stat. 350, Chap. XII), the 3rd Congress authorized the construction of six frigates as the first ships to be built for the United States Navy.

(2) One of the six frigates was built in Boston, Massachusetts, between 1794 and 1797, and is the only one of the original six ships to survive.

21 The provision was included as Section 1014 in the Senate-reported version of the FY2010 defense authorization bill (S. 1390).
(3) President George Washington named this frigate “Constitution” to represent the Nation’s founding document.

(4) President Thomas Jefferson, asserting the right of the United States to trade on the high seas, dispatched the frigate Constitution in 1803 as the flagship of the Mediterranean Squadron to end the depredations of the Barbary States against United States ships and shipping, which led to a treaty being signed with the Bashaw of Tripoli in the captain’s cabin aboard the frigate Constitution on June 4, 1805.

(5) The frigate Constitution, with her defeat of the H.M.S. Guerriere, secured the first major victory by the young United States Navy against the Royal Navy during the War of 1812, gaining in the process the nickname “Old Ironsides”, which she has proudly carried since.

(6) Congress awarded gold medals to four of the ship’s commanding officers (Preble, Hull, Stewart, and Bainbridge), a record unmatched by any other United States Navy vessel.

(7) The frigate Constitution emerged from the War of 1812 undefeated, having secured victories over three additional ships of the Royal Navy.

(8) As early as May 1815, the frigate Constitution had already been adopted as a symbol of the young Republic, as attested by the [Washington] National Intelligencer which proclaimed, “Let us keep ‘Old Ironsides’ at home. She has, literally become the Nation’s Ship ... and should thus be preserved ... in honorable pomp, as a glorious Monument of her own, and our other Naval Victories.”

(9) Rumors in 1830 that “Old Ironsides”, an aging frigate, was about to be scrapped resulted in a public uproar demanding that the ship be restored and preserved, spurred by Oliver Wendell Holmes’ immortal poem “Old Ironsides”.

(10) “Old Ironsides” circumnavigated the world between 1844 and 1846, showing the American flag as she searched for future coaling stations that would eventually fuel the steam-powered navy of the United States.

(11) The first Pope to set foot on United States sovereign territory was Pius IX onboard the frigate Constitution in 1849.

(12) On April 25, 1860, “Old Ironsides” evacuated the midshipmen of the United States Naval Academy from Annapolis, Maryland, to Newport, Rhode Island, preventing the young officers and the esteemed ship from falling into Confederate hands.

(13) In 1896, Congressman John F. “Honey Fitz” Fitzgerald introduced legislation to return “Old Ironsides” from the Portsmouth Naval Shipyards in New Hampshire, where she was moored pier side and largely forgotten, to Boston for her 100th birthday.

(14) Thousands of school children contributed pennies between 1925 an 1927 to help fund a much needed restoration for “Old Ironsides”.

(15) Between 1931 and 1934, more than 4,500,000 Americans gained inspiration, at the depth of the Great Depression, by going aboard “Old Ironsides” as she was towed to 76 ports on the Atlantic, Gulf, and Pacific coasts.

(16) The 83rd Congress enacted the Act of July 23, 1954 (68 Stat. 527, chapter 565), which directed the Secretary of the Navy to transfer to the States and appropriate commissions four other historic ships then on the Navy inventory, and to repair and equip the U.S.S. Constitution, as much as practicable, to her original condition, but not for active service.
(17) Queen Elizabeth II paid a formal visit to the U.S.S. Constitution in 1976, at the start of her state visit marking the bicentennial of the United States.

(18) The U.S.S. Constitution, in celebration of her bicentennial, returned to sea under sail on July 21, 1997, for the first time since 1881, proudly setting sails purchased by the contributions of thousands of pennies given by school children across the United States.

(19) The U.S.S. Constitution is the oldest commissioned warship afloat in the world.

(20) The U.S.S. Constitution is a national historic landmark.

(21) The U.S.S. Constitution continues to perform official, ceremonial duties, including in recent years hosting a congressional dinner honoring the late Senator John Chafee of Rhode Island, a special salute for the dedication of the John Moakley Federal Courthouse, a luncheon honoring British Ambassador Sir David Manning, and a special underway demonstration during which 60 Medal of Honor recipients each received a personal Medal of Honor flag.

(22) The U.S.S. Constitution celebrated on October 21, 2007, the 210th anniversary of her launching.

(23) The U.S.S. Constitution will remain a commissioned ship in the United States Navy, with the Navy retaining control of the ship, its material condition, and its employment.

(24) The U.S.S. Constitution’s primary mission will remain education and public outreach, and any Ship of State functions will be an adjunct to the ship’s primary mission.

(b) DESIGNATION AS AMERICA’S SHIP OF STATE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The U.S.S. Constitution is hereby designated as “America’s Ship of State”.

(2) REFERENCES.—The U.S.S. Constitution may be known or referred to as “America’s Ship of State”.

(3) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that the President, Vice President, executive branch officials, and members of Congress should use the U.S.S. Constitution for the conducting of pertinent matters of state, such as hosting visiting heads of state, signing legislation relating to the Armed Forces, and signing maritime related treaties.

(4) FEE OR REIMBURSEMENT STRUCTURE FOR NON-DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY USE.—The Secretary of the Navy shall determine an appropriate fee or reimbursement structure for any non-Department of the Navy entities using the U.S.S. Constitution for Ship of State purposes.
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