



Navy Ship Names: Background for Congress

Ronald O'Rourke
Specialist in Naval Affairs

July 2, 2010

Congressional Research Service

7-5700

www.crs.gov

RS22478

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 (JHSVs)** are being named for American traits and values. An exception has occurred with JHSV-4, the Navy's second JHSV (JHSVs 1 and 3 are to be operated by the Army), which the Secretary of the Navy announced on March 25, 2010, was being named for the city of Fall River, Massachusetts.

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 a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, either CVN-79 or CVN-80, should be named for former Senator Barry M. Goldwater; **H.Res. 330** would express the sense of the House that the Secretary of the Navy should name an appropriate Navy ship in honor of Marine Corps General Clifton B. Cates; and **H.Res. 1505** would express the sense of the House that the Secretary of the Navy should name the next appropriate naval ship in honor of World War II Medal of Honor recipient John William Finn. **H.Res. 1022**, introduced on January 20, 2010, and passed by the House on February 4, 2010, congratulates the Navy for honoring Medgar Evers by naming a naval ship for him. **Section 1022 of the FY2010 defense authorization act** (H.R. 2647/P.L. 111-84 of October 28, 2009) designates the historic Navy ship USS Constitution as "America's Ship of State."

Contents

Background	1
Authority for Naming Ships	1
Navy’s Process for Selecting Names.....	1
Naming Rules for Ship Types	2
Ships Named for Living Persons	5
Public’s Role in Naming Ships	5
Congress’s Role in Naming Ships.....	5
Congressional Influence on Pending Navy Ship-Naming Decisions	5
Congressional Responses to Announced Navy Ship-Naming Decisions	6
Past Legislation on Naming Ships	7
Legislative Activity in the 111 th Congress	9
H.Con.Res. 83 (Regarding Naming CVN-79 or CVN-80 for Barry Goldwater)	9
H.Res. 330 (Regarding Naming a Navy Ship for Clifton B. Cates)	10
H.Res. 1505 (Regarding Naming a Naval Ship for John William Finn)	11
H.Res. 1022 (Congratulating the Navy for Naming a Naval Ship for Medgar Evers).....	11
Section 1022 of FY2010 Defense Authorization Act (H.R. 2647/P.L. 111-84) (Designating USS Constitution as America’s Ship of State)	12

Tables

Table 1. Ships Named for Persons Who Were Living at the Time	5
Table 2. Recent Enacted Provisions	7
Table 3. Examples of Proposed Bills and Amendments	8

Contacts

Author Contact Information	15
----------------------------------	----

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.¹ The reference to the Secretary of the Navy disappeared from the U.S. Code in 1925.² The Code today (10 USC §7292) is silent on the issue of who has the authority to name new Navy ships,³ 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 name recommendations are conditioned by such factors as the name

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

⁴ Naval History and Heritage Command, “Ship Naming in the United States Navy,” available online at <http://www.history.navy.mil/faqs/faq63-1.htm>.

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.

⁷ See, for example, Donald R. Bouchoux, “The Name Game,” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, March 2000: 110-111; Norman Polmar, “Misnaming Aircraft Carriers,” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, September 2006: 30-31; and Norman Polmar, “Misnaming Navy Ships (Again),” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, February 2009: 89.

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

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 111th 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 Reserves 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 9.¹¹
- 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. 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.
 - **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 13th ship in the class would be named for the civil rights activist Medgar Evers.¹²
 - **Joint High Speed Vessels (JHSV)s**, which are being procured for both the Navy and Army, are being named for American traits and values.¹³ 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.¹⁴ 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.¹⁵ 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.

(...continued)

a Member of the House from February 5, 1974, until his death on February 8, 2010. For many of his years as a Representative, he was the chairman or ranking member of the Defense subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee. In announcing his decision to name the ship for Representative Murtha, Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus stated: "Both in uniform and in the halls of Congress, Chairman Murtha dedicated his life to serving his country both in the Marine Corps and Congress. His unwavering support of our Sailors and Marines, and in particular of our wounded warriors, was well known and deeply appreciated." ("Navy Names Amphibious Ship for Congressman John Murtha," *Navy News Service*, April 23, 2010.)

¹¹ Philip Ewing, "Navy To Name LPD 26 For Rep. John Murtha," *NavyTimes.com*, April 13, 2010.

¹² "Navy Names Ship After Civil Rights Activist Medgar Evers," *Navy News Service*, October 9, 2009.

¹³ Source: Navy Office of Legislative Affairs, in a telephone call to CRS following the July 16, 2009, naming announcement for JHSVs 1 through 3.

¹⁴ "Navy, Army Name First Three Joint High Speed Vessels," *Navy News Service*, July 16, 2009; Christopher P. Cavas, "Independence Shows Its Moves," *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.

¹⁵ Kevin S. O'Brien, "Secretary Names JHSV, Meets with Vets and Students," *Navy News Service*, March 26, 2010.

Ships Named for Living Persons

The Navy historically has only rarely named ships for living persons. As shown in **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.

Table 1. Ships Named for Persons Who Were Living at the Time

Ship type	Hull number	Ship name	Procured	In service
Aircraft carrier	CVN-70	Carl Vinson	FY1974	1982
Attack submarine	SSN-709	Hyman G. Rickover	FY1974	1984
Destroyer	DDG-51	Arleigh Burke	FY1985	1991
Aircraft carrier	CVN-74	John C. Stennis	FY1988	1995
Sealift ship	TAKR-300	Bob Hope	FY1993	1998
Aircraft carrier	CVN-76	Ronald Reagan	FY1995	2003
Destroyer	DDG-94	Nitze	FY1999	2005
Attack submarine	SSN-23	Jimmy Carter	FY1996	2005
Aircraft carrier	CVN-77	George H.W. Bush	FY2001	2008
Destroyer	DDG-108	Wayne E. Meyer	FY2004	2009
Attack submarine	SSN-785	John Warner	FY2010	2015

Source: Compiled by CRS. SSN-23 was originally procured in FY1992. Its procurement was suspended, and then reinstated in FY1996.

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

Congressional Influence on Pending Navy Ship-Naming Decisions

Congress has long maintained an interest in how Navy ships are named,¹⁷ and has influenced pending Navy decisions on the naming of certain ships. For example, one source states that “[the

¹⁶ Dean Lohmeyer, “Students Who Helped Name the Navy’s Newest Sub Tour State’s Namesake,” *Navy News Service*, October 25, 2008.

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.

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 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.¹⁹ 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.²⁰ 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.

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).

Congressional Responses to Announced Navy Ship-Naming Decisions

Congress can pass legislation regarding a ship-naming decision that has been announced by the Navy. Such legislation can express Congress’s views regarding the Navy’s announced decision, and if Congress so desires, can also suggest or direct the Navy to take some action. The following are two examples of such legislation:

- **H.Res. 1022 of the 111th Congress** is an example of a measure reflecting support for an announced Navy ship-naming decision. This measure, introduced on January 20, 2010, and passed by the House on February 4, 2010 (see “Legislative Activity in the 111th Congress”), congratulates the Navy on its decision to name a naval ship for Medgar Evers.
- **H.Con.Res. 312 of the 97th Congress** is an example of a measure that appears to reflect disagreement with an announced Navy ship-naming decision. This measure 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 instead 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, and was referred to the Seapower and Strategic and Critical Materials subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee on April 28, 1982. On May 10, 1982, the Navy modified the name of SSN-705 to *City of Corpus Christi*.

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.

¹⁹ Patrick Pexton, “Clinton Compromise: Carriers Truman And Reagan,” *Navy Times*, February 13, 1995: 19. See also “Navy Announces Aircraft Carrier To Be Named For President Truman,” *Associated Press*, February 2, 1995. CVN-75 had been preliminarily named the *United States*.

²⁰ 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,” *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, December 10, 2002.)

Past Legislation on Naming Ships

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 2. Recent Enacted Provisions

Fiscal Year	Public Law	Bill	Section	Ship	Name(s)
2007	P.L. 109-364	H.R. 5122	1012	CVN-78	Gerald R. Ford
2001	P.L. 106-398	H.R. 4205	1012	CVN-77	Lexington
1999	P.L. 105-261	H.R. 3616	1014	an LPD-17 class ship	Clifton B. Cates
1996	P.L. 104-106	S. 1124	1018	LHD-7	Iwo Jima
1996	P.L. 104-106	S. 1124	1018	LPD-17 class amphibious ships	Marine Corps battles or members of Marine Corps
1996	P.L. 104-106	S. 1124	1019	an appropriate ship	Joseph Vittori
1991	P.L. 101-510	H.R. 4739	1426	the next DDG-51	Samuel S. Stratton
1989	P.L. 100-456	H.R. 4481	1221	the next SSBN	Melvin Price
1989	P.L. 100-456	H.R. 4481	1222	an appropriate ship	Bob Hope
1989	P.L. 100-202	H.J.Res. 395	8138	CVN-74 or CVN-75	John C. Stennis

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

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 3. Examples of Proposed Bills and Amendments

[Congress] and Bill	Ship	Proposed name(s)
[111 th] H.Res. 1505	next appropriate naval ship	John William Finn
[111 th] H.Res. 330	an appropriate ship	Clifton B. Cates
[111 th] H.Con.Res. 83	CVN-79 or CVN-80	Barry M. Goldwater
[109 th] S. 2766	CVN-78	Gerald R. Ford
[107 th] H.Con.Res. 294	a new naval vessel	Bluejacket
[106 th] S.Con.Res. 84	CVN-77	Lexington
[105 th] S.Amdt. 2812 to S. 2057	LPD-17 class ship	Clifton B. Cates
[104 th] H.J.Res. 61	CVN-76	Ronald Reagan
[104 th] H.R. 445	CVN-76	Harry Truman
[104 th] S.Con.Res. 62	SSN-774	South Dakota
[104 th] S.J.Res. 17	CVN-76	Ronald Reagan
[104 th] S.Amdt. 2277 to S. 1026	LHD-7	Iwo Jima
[104 th] S.Amdt. 2277 to S. 1026	LPD-17 class ships	famous Marine Corps battles or heroes
[104 th] S.Amdt. 4350 to S. 1745	a SSN-774 class submarine	South Dakota
[103 rd] H.R. 5283	an appropriate ship	Joseph Vittori
[102 nd] H.Con.Res. 354	a guided missile cruiser	Pearl Harbor
[102 nd] H.R. 6115	CVN-76	Harry S Truman
[100 th] H.Amdt. 614 to H.R. 4264	next SSBN-726 class submarine deployed after enactment	Melvin Price
[100 th] S.Amdt. 1354 to H.J.Res. 395	CVN-74 or CVN-75	John C. Stennis
[98 th] H.Res. 99	an aircraft carrier	Wasp
[97 th] H.Con.Res. 312	a nonlethal naval vessel ^a	Corpus Christi ^a
[97 th] H.Res. 174	an aircraft carrier	Wasp
[97 th] H.R. 4977	CVN-72	Hyman G. Rickover
[93 rd] H.Con.Res. 386	CVN-70	Carl Vinson
[93 rd] H.Con.Res. 387	CVN-70	Carl Vinson
[93 rd] 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 instead 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, and was referred to the Seapower and Strategic and Critical Materials subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee on April 28, 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, expresses 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. 1505 (Regarding Naming a Naval Ship for John William Finn)

H.Res. 1505, introduced on July 1, 2010, expresses the sense of the House of Representatives that the Secretary of the Navy should name the next appropriate naval ship in honor of World War II Medal of Honor recipient John William Finn. The text of H.Res. 1505 was not available on the Legislative Information Service (LIS) as of the morning of July 2, 2010.

H.Res. 1022 (Congratulating the Navy for 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' 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.

Section 1022 of FY2010 Defense Authorization Act (H.R. 2647/P.L. 111-84) (Designating USS Constitution as America's Ship of State)

Section 1022 of the FY2010 defense authorization act (H.R. 2647/P.L. 111-84 of October 28, 2009) designates the historic Navy ship USS Constitution as "America's Ship of State."²¹ 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 Shipyard 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 and 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.

Author Contact Information

Ronald O'Rourke
Specialist in Naval Affairs
rorourke@crs.loc.gov, 7-7610