



Senate Approves Donation of USS Iowa to California

-- Measure would allow Stockton and other interested
California communities to bid for the Iowa --
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Washington, DC – The U.S. Senate has approved legislation by Senators Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.), Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa), Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.), and Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) to transfer one of our nation's greatest battleships, the USS Iowa, to California for permanent donation status. If signed into law, this measure would allow Stockton and other interested California communities to enter competitive bids for the battleship.

The California and Iowa Senators were able to include their amendment as part of a Manager's Amendment by Senators John Warner (R-Va.) and Carl Levin (D-Mich.) to the FY06 National Defense Authorization Act, which was approved unanimously by the Senate Thursday evening.

The following is the text of a floor statement by Senator Feinstein, who secured \$3 million in FY2000 to move the battleship from Rhode Island to California:

"I understand the affection that many Iowans have for this important ship and that a model of the USS Iowa can be viewed in the Rotunda of the Iowa State Capitol. Therefore, I truly appreciate the support of Senators Grassley and Harkin for helping to ensure that the USS Iowa will have a permanent home in California.

I was privileged to have the opportunity to introduce legislation in 1998 and 1999 to assist in transporting the USS Iowa from Newport, Rhode Island, to Suisun Bay in San Francisco, where it now sits as part of the Navy's Reserve Fleet. Through its transfer from reserve to donation status, any port community in California will have the opportunity to competitively bid for the battleship.

While I am sure a number of communities in California will be interested, I understand that the Port of Stockton has already begun making preparations and raising money to bid on this project.

Having the USS Iowa as a permanent floating museum in California will be an honor for my state and a tremendous memorial to the thousands of sailors who served aboard this battleship over the past six decades.

The USS Iowa, nicknamed the 'Big Stick,' was first launched in August 1942 and commissioned in February 1943 under the command of Captain John L. McCrea. In August 1943

it was mobilized for the first time along the Atlantic Coast to protect against the threat of German battleships believed to be operating in Norwegian waters.

In one of the more memorable moments of the battleship's history, the USS Iowa carried President Franklin D. Roosevelt to Casablanca on his way to the Teheran Conference in November 1943, and afterwards provided the President transportation back to the United States. The USS Iowa engaged in combat for the first time after it was deployed to the Pacific Theater as the flagship of Battleship Division 7.

During the early months of 1943, as part of the battle for the Marshall Islands, the USS Iowa supported U.S. aircraft carrier strikes and helped support numerous air strikes near Micronesia and neighboring islands. It was next deployed to assist U.S. forces in combat in the South Pacific near New Guinea and joined the Marianas campaign in June 1943.

During the Battle of the Philippines, the Iowa ably drove back and neutralized a series of air raids attempted by the Japanese Middle Fleet. Throughout the winter of 1944, the USS Iowa continued to engage in action off the Philippine coast until it was directed to return to the U.S. for maintenance in January 1945.

From January 1945 through March 1945, the Battleship Iowa received a full overhaul in the Port of San Francisco before steaming off for Okinawa to take part in combat operations near Japan. Arriving in April, the Iowa supported U.S. air strikes against Japan and the surrounding islands until the Japanese surrender in August 1945.

The ship was honored to be one of the few American battleships to sail into Tokyo Bay with the occupation forces and take part in the surrender ceremonies. After returning to the West Coast following the war, the USS Iowa operated in reserve status until it was decommissioned for the first time in March 1949.

In August 1951, after hostilities broke out in Korea, the USS Iowa was recommissioned and mobilized to that region. In March 1952, the battleship was deployed to the war zone as the flagship of Vice Admiral Robert Briscoe, the Commander of the Seventh Fleet. For the next seven months, the Iowa was fully engaged in support of the United Nations troops, bombarding strategic targets throughout North Korea.

Following the cessation of combat, the USS Iowa was sent to Norfolk, Virginia to receive an overhaul in October 1952. For the next five years, the Iowa was engaged in training maneuvers in Northern Europe (including NATO exercises) and in the Mediterranean Sea. In 1958, it was decommissioned for the second time and made part of the Atlantic Reserve Fleet based at Philadelphia.

Despite being decommissioned twice, the USS Iowa was renovated and upgraded in April 1984, and was recommissioned for the third time as part of President Reagan's plan to expand the Navy to 600 ships. Throughout the 1980s, the battleship spent the majority of its deployment in the waters off the European coast while also taking tours of the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea.

Despite surviving two wars and numerous combat engagements over its long history, the USS Iowa suffered its worst catastrophe in April 1989 when one of its 16-inch gun turrets blew up, causing the deaths of 47 sailors. The source of the explosion was never conclusively identified, in spite of a thorough investigation of the incident by the Navy. Even with its damaged

turret, the Iowa went on to further assignments in the Atlantic and Mediterranean Sea until it was decommissioned for the final time at Norfolk, Virginia, on October 26, 1990.

In early 1998, I was contacted by city officials in San Francisco requesting help with bringing the USS Iowa out to the West Coast. Together with Senator Boxer, we introduced legislation in October 1998, as part of the FY99 Defense Authorization Act, to provide for the transfer of the USS Iowa to San Francisco.

The next year I worked with colleagues in the California Congressional Delegation to secure \$3 million to pay for the transport of the battleship from Rhode Island to California. And on April 20, 2001, the USS Iowa finally arrived in San Francisco and has been berthed at Suisun Bay since that time.

This amendment ensures that this amazing battleship, which earned 9 battle stars for its World War II service, and 2 battle stars in the Korean War, will be memorialized permanently as a floating museum in California.

Once again, I thank Senators Grassley, Boxer, and Harkin for their support on this important provision.”

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