

AUTHORIZING THE PRESIDENT, IN HIS DISCRETION, TO
PERMIT THE STOPPAGE OF WORK ON CERTAIN COM-
BATANT VESSELS

JUNE 2 (legislative day, JUNE 1), 1948.—Ordered to be printed

Mr. BYRD, from the Committee on Armed Services, submitted the following

REPORT

[To accompany S. 2400]

The Committee on Armed Services, to whom was referred the bill (S. 2400) to authorize the President, in his discretion, to permit the stoppage of work on certain combatant vessels, having considered the same, report favorably thereon without amendment and recommend that the bill do pass.

PURPOSE OF THE BILL

Under a provision of the Second Supplemental Surplus Appropriation Rescission Act of 1946 those combatant vessels which were more than 20 percent complete as of March 1, 1946, are required to be completed. The purpose of this bill is to provide the President with authority to remove from the mandatory operation of that act, which necessitates their completion, 13 named vessels consisting of 1 battleship, 1 cruiser, 2 destroyer escorts, 7 destroyers, and 2 submarines. The cessation of construction will suspend present obligations against the Treasury to an extent of over \$300,000,000. It is intended that a portion of this sum will be used if appropriated to institute a new shipbuilding and conversion program of advance-design ships.

EXPLANATION AND JUSTIFICATION OF BILL

The enactment of this bill would have a dual effect both of which are considered highly desirable. First, it would enable the conservation, against any future emergency, of the ships included under its terms in a partially completed status. By suspending their construction at this time they will be of greater value in the future as they will be completed, if and when needed, with weapons not as yet fully perfected. The hulls of these vessels will be useful as stand-by

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units which may be readily adapted to such new techniques and armaments as may be originated or perfected in the future. An analogy may be found in cases of the *Lexington* and *Saratoga*. Both were originally laid down as battle cruisers, but could not be completed, as such, under the terms of the treaty limiting naval armaments, signed at Washington in 1922. They thereafter emerged as aircraft carriers and proved themselves to be useful and active components of the Pacific Fleet during World War II.

The second and very important function of the bill is to permit, by the deferment of construction of the 13 vessels affected, the employment of funds, which are otherwise obligated to complete them, for the construction and conversion of prototype ships which will be required to keep our Navy abreast of the trends of ship construction and naval operations currently being developed. Enactment of this bill will have no effect on the authorized tonnage strength of naval vessels and new construction of prototype ships is within the presently existing authorized tonnage of combatant vessels.

Included in the contemplated program of new construction is one new, large, flush-deck carrier, the size of which is determined by the dimensions and characteristics of the advance-type aircraft which it is designed to carry. It is not intended that units of this type will engage in strategic or saturation-type bombing attacks, but will be employed in naval functions such as controlling the air over the sea and over hostile beaches, ports, and coastal regions by destroying or neutralizing targets which would otherwise jeopardize the success of naval support for our armed forces. The new-type carrier will assist the Navy in maintaining surveillance over the earth's large expanse of water and insure the uninterrupted use of the sea lanes which are vital to the continued existence of the United States.

By letter to the chairman, Committee on Armed Services, the Secretary of the Navy requested enactment of this bill, and his letter dated March 25, 1948, is appended hereto and is made a part of this report.

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY,
Washington, March 25, 1948.

HON. CHAN GURNEY,
Chairman of the Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate.

MY DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: There is transmitted herewith a draft of proposed legislation to authorize the President, in his discretion, to permit the stoppage of work on certain combatant vessels.

A proviso of the Second Supplemental Surplus Appropriation Rescission Act, 1946, under the heading "Increase and replacement of naval vessels," provides that combatant vessels under construction on March 1, 1946, whose percentage of construction exceeded 20 percent on that date will be completed. The proposed legislation would authorize the President, in his discretion, to except from that proviso the following vessels: *Kentucky* (BB66); *Hawaii* (CB3); *Wagner* (DE539); *Vandiver* (DE540); *Castle* (DD720); *Woodrow R. Thompson* (DD721); *Lansdale* (DD766); *Seymour D. Owens* (DD767); *Noel* (DD768); *Abner Read* (DD769); *Seamen* (DD791); *Unicorn* (SS436); and *Walrus* (SS437).

If the proposed legislation is enacted, work will not be resumed on these vessels and they will be retained in their present condition for eventual completion if a future emergency requires. Thus, the present investment in these vessels will be preserved against a future emergency. Although no funds are currently being expended on the building of these vessels, enactment of the proposed legislation will result in removing future obligations of funds against the United States Treasury in excess of \$300,000,000. This will allow the obligation of funds for the construction and conversion of other vessels pursuant to the modified Navy shipbuilding program without increasing eventual Treasury withdrawals. The

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vessels embraced in the modified Navy shipbuilding program are considered essential in order that the Navy may keep pace with modern ship construction.

Enactment of the proposed legislation will not result in any additional cost to the Government.

For the foregoing reasons, the Navy Department recommends enactment of the proposed bill.

An identical report has been transmitted to the Speaker of the House of Representatives this date.

The Navy Department has been advised by the Bureau of the Budget that there would be no objection to the submission of the proposed legislation to the Congress for its consideration as the enactment thereof would not be in conflict with the program of the President.

Sincerely yours,

W. JOHN KENNEY,
Acting Secretary of the Navy.

