

106TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. J. RES. 56

Recognizing Commodore John Barry as the first flag officer of the United States Navy.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 7, 1999

Mr. KING introduced the following joint resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Armed Services

JOINT RESOLUTION

Recognizing Commodore John Barry as the first flag officer of the United States Navy.

Whereas John Barry, American merchant marine captain and native of County Wexford, Ireland, volunteered his services to the Continental Navy and was assigned by the Continental Congress as Captain of the Lexington, taking command of that vessel on March 14, 1776, and soon afterward gave to American liberty its first victory at sea with the capture of the Royal Navy sloop Edward;

Whereas Captain John Barry was principally responsible for organizing the crossing of the Delaware River which led directly to General George Washington's victory at Trenton during Christmas 1776, a victory in which Captain Barry also served actively as a combatant;

Whereas Captain John Barry rejected British General Lord Howe’s flattering offer to desert Washington and the patriot cause, stating: “Not the value and command of the whole British fleet can lure me from the cause of my country.”;

Whereas Captain John Barry, while in command of the frigate *Alliance*, successfully transported French gold to America to finance the War for American Independence, and also won the last sea battle of that war by defeating the HMS *Sybil* on March 10, 1783;

Whereas when the First Congress, acting under the new Constitution, authorized the raising and construction of the United States Navy, it was to Captain John Barry that President George Washington turned to build and lead the new nation’s infant Navy;

Whereas on February 22, 1797, President Washington personally conferred upon Captain John Barry, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, the rank of Captain, with “Commission No. 1”, United States Navy, dated June 14, 1794;

Whereas it was as Commodore of the Navy that John Barry built and first commanded the United States Navy and the squadron which included his flagship the USS *United States* and the USS *Constitution* (“Old Ironsides”);

Whereas John Barry served at the head of the United States Navy (the equivalent of the current position of Chief of Naval Operations), with the title of “Commodore” (in official correspondence) under Presidents Washington, Adams, and Jefferson;

Whereas Commodore John Barry is recognized, with General Stephen Moylan, in the Statue of Liberty museum as one

of the six foreign-born great leaders of the War for Independence;

Whereas pursuant to resolutions of Congress, “Commodore John Barry Day” was proclaimed for September 13, 1982, by President Reagan and for September 13, 1991, and September 13, 1992, by President Bush; and

Whereas in recognition of the historic role and achievements of Commodore John Barry, and of the sentiments of Navy and Merchant Marine veterans, of Irish-Americans, and of the patriotic population generally that United States history be properly told and heroes of the United States be properly honored: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives*
 2 *of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*
 3 That Commodore John Barry is recognized (effective as
 4 of February 22, 1797), and is hereby honored as the first
 5 flag officer of the United States Navy.

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