

lives of Mainers through technical and academic training. Since the first class of students in 1997, the Loring Job Corps Center in Limestone has helped students from Maine and across the Nation earn high school diplomas, construct long-term careers, and obtain great jobs. The Penobscot Job Corps has maintained the same mission for the past 45 years.

Education and community service alike are two of the cornerstones of both Job Corps Centers in Maine, resulting in the students not only changing their lives but the lives of those around them. The program's outreach and development with workforce partners has only enhanced its ability to reach out and enrich the lives of young Mainers. The Job Corps program encourages the vital education and creativity of bright young students throughout our country.

It is with great pride and appreciation that I congratulate our two Maine Centers and Job Corps for 60 years of critical work.

HONORING THE LIFE AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF CAPTAIN BENJAMIN MOULTON

HON. RUSS FULCHER

OF IDAHO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 28, 2024

Mr. FULCHER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor five of our precious fallen Marines, including Captain Benjamin Moulton, who were killed in a helicopter crash last week in California.

At 27 years old, Captain Moulton was known for his leadership and determination. Benjamin grew up with family roots in Emmett, Idaho, and received an ROTC scholarship to the University of Washington. Once commissioned into the Marines in 2019, Benjamin continued to strive for excellence and was promoted to Captain in August of last year.

Captain Moulton was a decorated pilot who flew with precision and skill, navigating through challenges with grace and determination. His love for aviation and his commitment to excellence inspired all who had the privilege to serve alongside him.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to the Moulton family and friends as they mourn the loss of this remarkable Marine. We are inspired by Benjamin's bravery and his service to our Nation will never be forgotten.

RECOGNIZING NEW HAMPSHIRE'S POLL WORKERS AND VOLUNTEERS

HON. ANN M. KUSTER

OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 28, 2024

Ms. KUSTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the important work of New Hampshire's poll workers and volunteers, who oversaw a safe, secure election in the first-in-the-nation primary that took place on Tuesday, January 23, 2024.

For more than 100 years, New Hampshire has been proud to host our country's first presidential primary, an honor our state takes very seriously. This primary would not be possible without New Hampshire's dedicated poll

workers and volunteers. This year, like every time before, our poll workers demonstrated the power of our democracy and the importance of civic responsibility by dutifully and earnestly conducting this year's election.

I want to thank these citizens for stepping up for our democracy. New Hampshire's poll workers continue to set an example for the nation in their tireless efforts to count every vote and ensure that the voices of all Granite Staters are heard at the ballot box. These poll workers prove that despite ongoing efforts to polarize or politicize our elections, our American democracy is strong. Granite Stater poll workers help inspire increased voter confidence and turnout and ensure a smoother process for our state's elections. It is critical that all communities throughout our state are able to have their voices heard in our democracy.

Poll workers, local town officials, and volunteers are instrumental to our electoral process, preserving the right to vote for all Americans by remaining impartial and fair throughout the process, from overseeing voter registration to processing ballots. All Americans deserve to have their voices represented.

Mr. Speaker, I say thank you again to all of the poll workers and volunteers who stepped up to serve their communities and our democracy.

CELEBRATING ORANGE COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE'S 100TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. ABIGAIL DAVIS SPANBERGER

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 28, 2024

Ms. SPANBERGER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the Orange County Chamber of Commerce and to congratulate them on a century of unwavering dedication to the prosperity and success of businesses in Orange County, Virginia.

Over the last 100 years, Orange County's businesses and entrepreneurs have benefitted from the network and expertise provided by the Orange County Chamber of Commerce. A cornerstone of Orange County, the staff and members of the Chamber have been a vital force—driving economic growth, fostering innovation, and championing the spirit of entrepreneurship across Orange County.

Notably, the Orange County Chamber of Commerce has encouraged collaboration through their signature events—the Orange Street Festival and the Orange Uncorked Wine Festival. These events have not only helped nurture countless businesses and forged valuable relationships within the community, but they have also provided families across Orange with memorable experiences and fun activities.

Today, the Chamber boasts a membership of more than 280 Virginians. Each member, alongside Chamber staff, leadership, and volunteers, has contributed to the success and longevity of the Orange County Chamber of Commerce. As their Representative, I wish to extend my greatest appreciation for the work the Orange County Chamber of Commerce does to support the local economy and improve the lives of residents in and around Orange County.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me in congratulating the Orange County Chamber of Commerce on 100 years of service to Orange County, and in celebrating their growth, resilience, and commitment to excellence. I look forward to all they will accomplish in years to come.

HONORING THE SERVICE OF BENJAMIN "BEN" COOPER

HON. JOE COURTNEY

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 28, 2024

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the inspiring life and noble career of a lifelong Connecticut resident and patriot, Mr. Benjamin "Ben" Cooper. A member of America's "Greatest Generation" who honorably served in the U.S. Armed Forces in World War II, Mr. Cooper witnessed the unspeakable horror of mass casualties and genocide that occurred in the European theater. Rather than suppressing this experience, he made it a mission to share the unspeakable tragedies he witnessed on the frontlines of the War. He transformed his experience into lessons for high school students and taught kindness and empathy for others. His service and lessons have inspired many generations of American citizens to care for each other with the same sincerity and dedication seen in Mr. Cooper himself.

Born in 1921 to Max and Fannie Cooper, Ben is a lifelong resident of West Hartford, Connecticut. Ben attended Hall High School and graduated in 1940. After attending George Washington University for one year, he returned to Connecticut in 1941 and worked at Colt Arms Factory in Hartford. Despite not having officially joined the military yet, Ben contributed to the war effort through his testing of guns for the Colt Company. Come 1942, Ben had been drafted into the U.S. Army as a combat medic in the 45th Infantry Division. Soon after his drafting, Ben met his wife of 65 years, Dorothy, and they married on July 14, 1944, in a Maine synagogue shortly before he was deployed to serve in the European theater. Ben's selfless nature manifested through his becoming a medic, starting a long legacy of sacrifice and consummate service to those in need. Through his service, Ben served as a shining beacon in an all-enveloping sea of darkness. His service safeguarded the life and liberty of his fellow citizens and the peoples across Europe.

Unforgettably, the U.S. Army 45th Infantry helped liberate Dachau concentration camp in 1945. Alongside his fellow soldiers, Ben bore witness to the deplorable condition of the victims of the concentration camp. Darkness and inhumanity enveloped Dachau. The scent of incinerated flesh hung heavily on the camp's air, and its prisoners stood in front of their liberators emaciated, so weak that any attempt at nourishment was rejected by their broken bodies. The extent of these crimes against humanity and decency left Ben speechless and traumatized. He would not speak of the camp or war experiences for decades to come.

In 1990, Ben began to share his wartime experiences. Through an interview with a Torrington High School history teacher, Ben was able to open up about his personal history. This interview served as the genesis of

Ben's new mission: to teach America's future generations of the impact of prejudice and bigotry, and to promote kindness and compassion. He spoke at many high schools, including Simsbury and Hall, about his wartime experiences. His lessons always included advocacy for kindness. He brought historical events from textbooks to life through his lived memories. Ben hoped that teaching this part of history would ensure that it would never be repeated.

In 2010, Ben met Henny Simon, a liberated victim of the Nazi concentration camps. Until her death in 2017, the two visited high schools in Connecticut and taught classes on WWII. Students across Connecticut gained valuable insight on how precious a thing our liberties and rights are, and how fiercely they need to be defended. The pair were offered to include their experiences in a documentary titled "In Times of War." Fortunately, their stories have been immortalized through their lessons and the documentary and countless news articles.

Mr. Speaker, even in the darkest hour of our civilization, courageous truth tellers like Ben Cooper refuse to be silenced by fear or indifference. Ben's impact on our nation's citizens is immeasurable, and scores of young citizens will remember his stories and examples. Regrettably understanding the savagery of Nazi barbarism is of critical importance in the world we live in today. Our country should honor Ben's gentle kindness and conviction that touched thousands of fellow Americans. I ask that my colleagues join me in immortalizing Ben's story.

RECOGNIZING THE MARITIME SECURITY INFRASTRUCTURE COUNCIL'S PLAN TO MODERNIZE THE USMMA CAMPUS

HON. ANDREW R. GARBARINO

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 28, 2024

Mr. GARBARINO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today as a member of the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Congressional Board of Visitors to thank the experts of the Maritime Security Infrastructure Council.

Recognizing the vital role of the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy in our national security and concerned about outdated and deteriorating conditions across campus, they assembled a straightforward, multi-year plan to bring the campus up to a standard commensurate with its crucial function. I am pleased to include in the RECORD a summary of their plan to modernize the Academy's 80-year-old infrastructure as well as a link to the Full Speed Ahead Plan in its entirety, which can be found at <https://wearetheusmma.com/fullspeedahead/>.

Graduates of the USMMA, one of our Nation's five federal service academies, make up more than 80 percent of the U.S. Navy Strategic Sealift Officer Force. Without these service-committed mariners, the Nation would have no assured source of trained, licensed officers to crew the vessels which move materiel, fuel and supplies to foreign shores in wartime. Without a comprehensive capital improvement plan and its timely execution, conditions on the USMMA's Kings Point, New York campus will continue to worsen, ad-

versely impacting mission-critical training and hindering recruitment of dedicated service-obligated midshipmen.

For far too long, Congress has ignored the infrastructure required to provide USMMA midshipmen the specialized education and training they need to fulfill their mission. It is now time to make the institution worthy of their commitment to serve our Nation.

Maritime Security Infrastructure Council

U.S. MERCHANT MARINE ACADEMY FULL SPEED AHEAD PLAN

FULL SPEED AHEAD: A PLAN TO ADDRESS CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS AT THE U.S. MERCHANT MARINE ACADEMY

Background: In January 2021, the Maritime Security Infrastructure Council (MSIC), a group with expertise in major construction project management and concerned about the deterioration of the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA) infrastructure, developed a comprehensive plan to bring the campus up to the standards necessary to prepare USMMA Midshipmen to lead our Nation's maritime mission in the 21st century.

The Full Speed Ahead Plan is an intensive 8-year program to execute a decades overdue, comprehensive modernization: new academic buildings, physical readiness/training facilities, midshipmen morale and welfare spaces, parking structures, faculty and senior staff housing, utilities, IT, and campus security upgrades, and renovations of many existing buildings. This plan is adaptable, e.g., it can be adjusted for longer construction timelines and funding schedules, and—importantly—it is intended to be executed while keeping USMMA fully operational throughout construction.

Previous cost estimates were \$611M in January 2021 and \$820M in March 2022. The estimated cost when adjusted for inflation has now risen to \$1.02B; additional delay will only further increase the cost of this urgently needed modernization.

The need: With over 80 years in service to our nation, a comprehensive modernization is long overdue if USMMA is to continue producing world-class, service-committed merchant marine officers who are the backbone of the U.S. Navy's Strategic Sealift Officer Force and a crucial element of defense readiness.

Congress has rightly recognized the necessity of and supported funding modernization projects at the other federal service academies, especially West Point and Annapolis. Long-term low funding levels have left the campus under-resourced, and the result is a deteriorating campus that makes attracting a diverse applicant pool and providing state-of-the-art mission critical training even more difficult. Many of the facilities date back to the Academy's founding in the 1940s and are simply not conducive to the immersive training and demanding coursework expected from our Nation's five service academies.

Modern IT is nearly nonexistent in several buildings; what is available cannot accommodate even the most basic digital needs of Midshipmen, let alone support the increasingly high-tech vessel systems that they must master.

Aside from minor Midshipmen Barracks repairs in the 2000s, there have been no renovations or upgrades since 1988. Nearly every building on campus has exceeded its life expectancy and now requires replacement or major renovation.

This is particularly true of the Academy's physical training, leadership readiness, and athletic facilities. Although USMMA was the first federal service academy to admit women in 1974, no additional athletic or training spaces have been provided for fe-

male teams in the ensuing 50 years, clearly contrary to the requirements of Title IX. Overall, these limited and outdated facilities are inadequate for Midshipmen to maintain physical readiness standards of the U.S. Navy and other services and adversely impact the recruitment of future Midshipmen. Midshipmen need a purpose-built pool, featuring a separate wave pool with high dive/jump capabilities in order to accommodate their specific mandatory training needs for rescue and survival at sea.

The Fix: Our working group of maritime executives, engineers, architects, and construction industry professionals—some USMMA graduates—propose the authorization and funding of a multi-year program of infrastructure replacement and improvement projects.

The Budget and Timeline Snapshot: We suggest directed funding for foundational design work that will serve as the blueprint for an aggressive eight-year construction and project management program. However, the plan can be readily adapted to meet longer construction timelines and funding schedules, along with any potential project modifications. As of January 2024, the current cost of the plan is \$1.02B over eight years.

The Plan: For decades, concerned stakeholders have unsuccessfully sought to upgrade USMMA's physical plant; this plan reflects much of the quality thinking and hard work that went into earlier plans, which regrettably never came to fruition. This document specifically builds on the input of those earlier planning initiatives.

This plan details the facilities necessary for the USMMA to preserve its position as the preeminent leader in maritime education in the Nation, today and into the future. It reflects a long overdue acknowledgment that the campus has fallen woefully behind the other four federal service academies and other peer top-tier institutions.

The plan meets the long-term objectives of the Academy through facilities that will promote modern educational best practices, including globally connected research facilities; engineering powerplant laboratories; 21st century IT-enabled classrooms.

Support mission critical proficiencies: Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping (STCW) applications laboratories; Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) training pool; Conference and license exam space.

Promote readiness: Accessible modernized fitness facilities sufficient to enable all Midshipmen to maintain physical readiness standards required of USN Reserve officers; NCAA-standard facilities for all athletes; Health and wellness center.

Facilitate leadership development: Weapons range; enhanced waterfront facilities; band facility.

Attract a diverse pool of applicants to ensure USMMA enrolls the best and the brightest.

Provide continuing education and industry engagement facilities: Maritime Center of Excellence for research, innovation, and policy development; MSCE accreditation required post-graduate continuing education opportunities; Maritime industry leadership conference capability.

Maintain a secure facility and a safe environment: secure campus at a level necessary to protect a federal facility; centralized security/access control at main gate and academy facilities; fencing and monitoring of campus boundaries; cyber-secure, modernized IT network.

Master Planning Process and Principles: The 82-acre campus is a unique, historically significant property. Our plan is designed to modernize the campus without expanding its current footprint.

The Education District includes the original 1943 academic buildings, barracks, and