

104TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. J. RES. 196

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

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SEPTEMBER 26, 1996

Mr. KING (for himself and Mr. MANTON) introduced the following joint resolution; which was referred to the Committee on National Security

JOINT RESOLUTION

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

Whereas the United States of America is a “Nation of Immigrants”;

Whereas the contribution of immigrants to the defense of the public liberty has been above and beyond what the proportion of immigrants in the general population would indicate;

Whereas John Barry, American Merchant Marine captain and native of County Wexford, Ireland, volunteered his services to the Continental Navy and was assigned by Congress as Captain of the Lexington, taking command on December 7, 1775, and soon afterward gave to American liberty our 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 which led directly to Washington's great victory at Trenton during Christmas 1776, a victory in which he was also an active combatant;

Whereas Captain John Barry rejected 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, in command of the frigate Alliance, having successfully transported French gold to America to finance the War for Independence, also won the last sea battle of that war against the HMS Sybille on March 10, 1783;

Whereas Captain John Barry organized the compulsory attendance of members of the Pennsylvania Assembly in Philadelphia on September 17, 1787, thus insuring the quorum necessary to call a convention and recommend the ratification of the Constitution of the United States;

Whereas when the United States Congress authorized the raising and construction of the United States Navy, it was to Captain John Barry that the Commander in Chief turned to build and lead our infant Navy;

Whereas on February 22, 1797, President George Washington personally conferred "Commission No. 1", dated June 14, 1794, upon Captain John Barry "by and with the advice and consent of the Senate";

Whereas it was Commodore John Barry who built and first commanded the United States Navy and the squadron which included his flagship the U.S.S. United States and the U.S.S. Constitution ("Old Ironsides");

Whereas Commodore John Barry is recognized with General Stephen Moylan in the Statue of Liberty museum as one of six foreign born great leaders of the War for Independence;

Whereas President Ronald Reagan proclaimed September 13, 1982, as “Commodore John Barry Day”, and President George Bush similarly proclaimed September 13 in 1991 and 1992 as “Commodore John Barry Day” pursuant to resolutions of Congress;

Whereas Commodore John Barry Day is a legal holiday in Pennsylvania, and in 1986, the New York State Legislature enacted that Commodore John Barry Day, September 13, be an official annual observance of the State of New York;

Whereas John Barry served, as what we would today call Chief of Naval Operations, at the head of the United States Navy, with the title of “Commodore” (in official correspondence) under three Presidents: Washington, Adams, and Jefferson; 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 America, and of the patriotic population generally that our history be properly told and our heroes 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 as the first,

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1 and therefore senior, flag officer of the United States
2 Navy.

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