

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR JANICE HAHN

Proclaiming May 22, 2026 as National Maritime Day to Honor American Merchant Mariners

Every year, on May 22nd, the United States observes National Maritime Day to honor the courage of American Merchant Mariners and recognize the maritime industry's contributions to national defense and economic prosperity.

In times of peace, Merchant Mariners serve as civilians responsible for transporting commercial goods and military cargo around the world. But in times of war and national emergency, they answer the call to serve alongside our armed forces, often at tremendous personal risk.

In World War II, 243,000 Merchant Mariners transported troops, fuel, equipment, and supplies across hostile waters and endured the highest casualty per capita of any service branch during the war. General Dwight Eisenhower declared in 1944 that “when final victory is ours there is no organization that will share its credit more deservedly than the Merchant Marine...and their contribution to final victory will be long remembered.”¹ During the Vietnam War, they carried 95 percent of the supplies used by U.S. forces. In every major conflict, Merchant Mariners have ensured that American troops had the resources necessary to fight and survive.

¹ <https://www.natioalww2museum.org/war/articles/merchant-marine-world-war-ii>

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Despite these personal sacrifices, many Americans are unaware of the critical role they have played throughout our history. Yet, in 1989 in San Pedro, Los Angeles, the first national memorial was commissioned for merchant seamen by local seamen to honor Merchant Mariners who served in all wars in the United States.² The bronze statue “depicts two merchant seamen climbing a Jacob’s ladder after making a rescue at sea.”³ It is accompanied by a bronze plaque on the memorial that states, “The United States Merchant Marine has faithfully served our country in times of war and peace hauling cargo to every corner of the world. This Memorial is dedicated to those brave men and women of all races, creeds and colors who answered that call to serve.”⁴

In furtherance of honoring the Merchant Marine, Los Angeles County will continue to acknowledge their work, sacrifice, and service for all Americans.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors proclaim May 22, 2026 as National Maritime Day to honor American Merchant Mariners.

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² <https://sanpedro.com/san-pedro-area-points-interest/american-merchant-marine-veterans-memorial/>

³ Id.

⁴ Id.