MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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FIRST REGULAR SESSION

ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTEENTH LEGISLATURE

Legislative Document

NO. 496

H.P. 375 House of Representatives, February 23, 1987 Reference to the Committee on State and Local Government suggested and ordered printed.

EDWIN H. PERT, Clerk
Presented by Representative VOSE of Eastport.
Cosponsored by Representative SCARPINO of St. George and
Senator CLARK of Cumberland.

STATE OF MAINE

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD NINETEEN HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-SEVEN

•	AN ACT to Establish Maine Merchant Marine Day.
	Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as Follows:
	Sec. 1. 1 MRSA §126 is enacted to read:
5	126. Maine Merchant Marine Day
	The Governor shall annually issue a proclamation
-	setting aside May 22nd as Maine Merchant Marine Day.
1	he proclamation shall invite and urge the people of
t	the State to observe the day in schools and other
2	uitable places with appropriate ceremony and study.
1	he Maine Maritime Academy and the Department of Edu-
c	ational and Cultural Services may make appropriate
	nformation available to the people and the schools
	rithin the limits of their budgets.

i	The purpose of commemorating the United States
2	Merchant Marine is to recognize the courage and
3	heroism of merchant mariners who have served the na-
4	tion in times of national emergencies. Merchant
5	mariners have valiantly served the nation during pe-
6	riods of international conflict by serving as combat-
7	ant crews on Letters of Marque during the Revolution-
8	ary War and the War of 1812 and on armed vessels dur-
9	ing the Civil War. In World War I and World War II,
10	they served on ships equipped with naval armament
11	while transporting supplies and troops between the
12	home front and war fronts. Thousands of merchant
13	mariners have been killed, captured or injured in the
14	defense of the nation.

- 15 Sec. 2. 20-A MRSA §405, sub-§8 is enacted to 16 read:
- 17 Maine Merchant Marine Day. Merchant Maine Day is May 22nd as established in Title 1, 18 19 section 126.

20 STATEMENT OF FACT

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This bill establishes Maine Merchant Marine Day to honor the courage and heroism of the many merchant mariners who have valiantly served the nation in times of international conflict. Such wars included the Revolutionary War; the War of 1812; the Mexican War; the Spanish American War; World War I; World War II; the Korean Conflict; and the Vietnam Conflict. ships and men of the merchant marine were sacrificed in all of these contests.

During World War II, the United States Merchant Marine distinguished itself far above the call of duty in numerous perilous situations in support of the different branches of the United States armed The Army and Navy commonly used the merchant vices. ships as tactical transports for men and material during naval operations and invasions against hostile It is appropriate that on May 22nd, the men shores. who served their country so valiantly be honored commended by the people of the State.

For deeds of heroism, the merchant mariners in World War II were awarded 145 Distinguished Service Medals and 426 Meritorius Service Medals. Merchant seamen were awarded 115,000 Merchant Marine Combat Bars, indicating that their ships were directly engaged in action with the enemy. Merchant ships in World War II carried naval guns which were manned by the men of the Naval Armed Guard assisted by the merchant crew.

The United States merchant fleet in World War II carried over 3/4 of all war material going from the United States to overseas theaters. They brought to America the raw materials which sustained our defense production. They continued their duty after the war, when the service worked to provide relief to areas devastated by the war, including a monthly average of 1,500,000 tons of coal, 800,000 tons of grain and 200,000 tons of flour.

The first war loss of World War II occurred on November 8, 1940, and did not end until after the surrender of Japan. In all of World War II, 673 United States merchant ships were lost and over 130 were damaged. More than 6,700 merchant seamen in World War II died at sea, including 56 men from Maine. More than 600 seamen were captured and made prisoners of war, including 3 from Maine, one of whom died while a prisoner of the Japanese.

The members of the Merchant Marine were all volunteers, who manned the "bridge of ships" to transport men and materials through enemy contested waters. The Merchant Marine stands in heroic stature with the Army, the Navy, the Marine Corps and the Coast Guard in the role it played toward the winning of World War II.

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