

By Senator Wise

5-957A-04

1 Senate Memorial No. ____

2 A memorial to the Congress of the United
3 States, urging Congress to request that the
4 Secretary of the Navy name a future United
5 States Navy warship the "USS Charles E.
6 Bennett" in honor of United States
7 Representative Bennett who died September 6,
8 2003, at the age of 92.

9
10 WHEREAS, Charles Edward Bennett served the residents of
11 Jacksonville as a member of the Florida State Legislature in
12 1940-1941, setting aside that seat to enlist as a Private in
13 the United States Army, where he served until 1947 as a combat
14 Infantryman, was eventually promoted to the rank of Captain,
15 and received the Silver Star, Bronze Star, Combat Infantryman
16 Badge, the Philippine Legion of Honor and Gold Cross, and the
17 French Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur for gallantry in
18 action, and

19 WHEREAS, Charles E. Bennett was elected to the United
20 States Congress in November 1948, and served with exemplary
21 distinction in Congress for the next 44 years, representing
22 Northeastern Florida with consummate dignity, integrity,
23 professionalism, and unsurpassed diligence in casting over
24 18,000 votes and not missing a legislative recorded vote for
25 41 years, a Congressional record, even though he contracted
26 polio while serving during World War II and consequently wore
27 leg braces and walked with a cane, and

28 WHEREAS, Congressman Bennett was Florida's
29 longest-serving Congressman and the second-longest tenured
30 member of the United States House of Representatives when he
31 retired in 1993, and

1 WHEREAS, Mr. Bennett served as Dean and Chairman of
2 Florida's Congressional Delegation for many years, during
3 which time he supported innumerable initiatives that benefited
4 the Sunshine State and its residents, and

5 WHEREAS, Charles E. Bennett was also the author of many
6 books of Florida history which collectively added significant
7 understanding and appreciation of early Florida history, and
8 he was instrumental in creating the Fort Caroline National
9 Memorial and the Timucuan Ecological and Historical Preserve,
10 then declined to accept the military disability retirement pay
11 to which he was entitled but directed that it be donated to
12 historic preservation, primarily in this state, and

13 WHEREAS, from September 1968 through October 1992,
14 Congressman Bennett served as Chairman of the Seapower and
15 Strategic Materials Subcommittee of the Armed Services
16 Committee, and he was, as stated in a unanimous resolution of
17 that committee, "the most influential Member of Congress on
18 naval shipbuilding and naval policy for more than two
19 decades," and

20 WHEREAS, not only did Congressman Bennett sponsor bills
21 that provided needed ships for the United States Navy,
22 significantly contributing to the U.S. victory in the cold
23 war, but he also championed legislation that increased
24 military pay, improved military housing, and reformed military
25 justice, and he wrote legislation that created the Arms
26 Control Agency and allowed military services to assist in the
27 effort to stop drug smuggling, and

28 WHEREAS, Congressman Bennett introduced the first bill
29 to provide a Code of Ethics for the United States House of
30 Representatives, later served as Chairman of the Committee on
31

1 Standards of Official Conduct, and fought for higher standards
2 of ethics throughout his tenure, and

3 WHEREAS, Charles E. Bennett sponsored legislation to
4 add the phrase "In God we Trust" to the United States coins
5 and currency and legislation enacting the Americans with
6 Disabilities Act, providing federal assistance for school
7 construction, and improving public facilities throughout the
8 State of Florida, and

9 WHEREAS, Congressman Bennett was recognized by six
10 "Watchdog of the Treasury Awards" from the National
11 Association of Businessmen for his strong support of fiscal
12 responsibility in government, and

13 WHEREAS, Charles Edward Bennett was a patriot who will
14 long be remembered for his strong, principled representation
15 of his constituents, his impeccable voting record, his
16 uncompromising ethics and advocacy for ethical reforms in
17 Congress, and his leadership in helping to ensure a strong
18 national defense with a modern, capable Navy as the
19 cornerstone of national security, NOW, THEREFORE,

20
21 Be It Resolved by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

22
23 That the Congress of the United States is requested to
24 ask the Secretary of the Navy to name a future United States
25 Navy warship the "USS Charles E. Bennett."

26 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
27 dispatched to the President of the United States, to the
28 President of the United States Senate, to the Speaker of the
29 United States House of Representatives, and to each member of
30 the Florida delegation to the United States Congress.

31