

HM0933

2004

House Memorial

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS, Mr. Bennett served as Dean and Chairman of Florida's Congressional Delegation for many years, during which time he supported innumerable initiatives that benefited the

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31 Sunshine State and its residents, and

32 WHEREAS, Charles E. Bennett was also the author of many
33 books of Florida history which collectively added significant
34 understanding and appreciation of early Florida history, and he
35 was instrumental in creating the Fort Caroline National Memorial
36 and the Timucuan Ecological and Historical Preserve, then
37 declined to accept the military disability retirement pay to
38 which he was entitled but directed that it be donated to
39 historic preservation, primarily in this state, and

40 WHEREAS, from September 1968 through October 1992,
41 Congressman Bennett served as Chairman of the Seapower and
42 Strategic Materials Subcommittee of the Armed Services
43 Committee, and he was, as stated in a unanimous resolution of
44 that committee, "the most influential Member of Congress on
45 naval shipbuilding and naval policy for more than two decades,"
46 and

47 WHEREAS, not only did Congressman Bennett sponsor bills
48 that provided needed ships for the United States Navy,
49 significantly contributing to the U.S. victory in the cold war,
50 but he also championed legislation that increased military pay,
51 improved military housing, and reformed military justice, and he
52 wrote legislation that created the Arms Control Agency and
53 allowed military services to assist in the effort to stop drug
54 smuggling, and

55 WHEREAS, Congressman Bennett introduced the first bill to
56 provide a Code of Ethics for the United States House of
57 Representatives, later served as Chairman of the Committee on
58 Standards of Official Conduct, and fought for higher standards
59 of ethics throughout his tenure, and

60 WHEREAS, Charles E. Bennett sponsored legislation to add

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61 the phrase "In God we Trust" to the United States coins and
62 currency and legislation enacting the Americans with
63 Disabilities Act, providing federal assistance for school
64 construction, and improving public facilities throughout the
65 State of Florida, and

66 WHEREAS, Congressman Bennett was recognized by six
67 "Watchdog of the Treasury Awards" from the National Association
68 of Businessmen for his strong support of fiscal responsibility
69 in government, and

70 WHEREAS, Charles Edward Bennett was a patriot who will long
71 be remembered for his strong, principled representation of his
72 constituents, his impeccable voting record, his uncompromising
73 ethics and advocacy for ethical reforms in Congress, and his
74 leadership in helping to ensure a strong national defense with a
75 modern, capable Navy as the cornerstone of national security,
76 NOW, THEREFORE,

77

78 Be It Resolved by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

79

80 That the Congress of the United States is requested to ask
81 the Secretary of the Navy to name a future United States Navy
82 warship the "USS Charles E. Bennett."

83 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
84 dispatched to the President of the United States, to the
85 President of the United States Senate, to the Speaker of the
86 United States House of Representatives, and to each member of
87 the Florida delegation to the United States Congress.