

1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to the designation of the official
3 state flagship; amending s. 15.0465, F.S.;
4 redesignating the official state flagship as the S.S.
5 American Victory; providing an effective date.

6
7 WHEREAS, built in 1944, the S.S. American Victory is one of
8 only five operational World War II merchant vessels left in the
9 United States and served in World War II, the Korean War, and
10 the Vietnam War, and

11 WHEREAS, the S.S. American Victory is an interactive
12 maritime museum located in Tampa, and

13 WHEREAS, the United States' entry into World War II
14 transformed American history and directly affected more than
15 250,000 Floridians who served on active duty, and

16 WHEREAS, of these brave Floridians, more than 3,500 gave
17 their lives in defense of the United States during World War II,
18 and

19 WHEREAS, Florida is the ideal location for the S.S.
20 American Victory, as the tourism industry caters to nationwide
21 visitors who can experience firsthand what it was like to serve
22 on board the ship, and

23 WHEREAS, the S.S. American Victory is a 455-foot steamship
24 that was launched on May 24, 1945, during the largest ship
25 building effort in United States history, and

26 WHEREAS, the S.S. American Victory set sail from the United
27 States into the treacherous waters of the Pacific Ocean awaiting
28 orders for the invasion of Japan, and

29 WHEREAS, the S.S. American Victory assisted the war effort
30 during the final days of World War II by transporting military
31 equipment, troops, ammunition, and supplies for the Allied
32 Forces, and

33 WHEREAS, the S.S. American Victory sailed around the world
34 delivering provisions, industrial materials, machinery, and raw
35 materials after the war under the auspices of the Marshall Plan
36 to countries devastated by the destruction of World War II, and

37 WHEREAS, the S.S. American Victory transported cargo, fuel,
38 and ammunition during the Korean War, and

39 WHEREAS, the S.S. American Victory repatriated 260
40 casualties, including three fallen Floridians, Army Private P.C.
41 White, Marine Second Lieutenant Robert C. Craig, and Marine
42 Private First Class Joseph T. Jacobs, to the United States
43 during the Korean War, and

44 WHEREAS the S.S. American Victory was reactivated to
45 service in 1966 to support the Vietnam War and conducted 12
46 voyages supporting the war effort by transporting military
47 equipment, troops, ammunition, and supplies, and

48 WHEREAS, the S.S. American Victory sailed from the James
49 River Reserve Fleet on March 13, 1985, to participate in the
50 United States' Victory Ship Validation Program, a program

51 designed to gauge the time and expense necessary to reactivate
52 victory-class ships, which enabled the S.S. American Victory to
53 be brought back to full operational status and to perform sea
54 trials after restoration, and

55 WHEREAS, the S.S. American Victory was then transferred by
56 an act of Congress from the Maritime Administration to The
57 Victory Ship, Inc., in her home port of Tampa, and

58 WHEREAS, the S.S. American Victory has been a landmark
59 destination for the past 25 years within Tampa and was
60 recognized as a National Historic Place in 2002, and

61 WHEREAS, the S.S. American Victory acts as a preeminent
62 location for military retirement or promotion ceremonies,
63 marriage ceremonies, and many other types of celebrations, and

64 WHEREAS, the S.S. American Victory actively supports
65 military charities and foundations such as America's Gold Star
66 Families, Warrior Ethos, Florida 4 Warriors, The Mission
67 Continues, the Navy SEAL Foundation, and the Green Beret
68 Foundation, and

69 WHEREAS, the S.S. American Victory continually supports
70 community organizations and foundations such as Visit Tampa Bay,
71 Leadership Florida, Leadership Tampa Bay, Leadership Tampa, the
72 Maritime Alliance, Propeller Club - Port of Tampa, and Friends
73 of the Tampa Riverwalk, and

74 WHEREAS, the S.S. American Victory has acted as a primary
75 platform for thousands of training hours for a wide range of
76 organizations over her 25 years in Tampa, and

77 WHEREAS, the S.S. American Victory has hosted all branches
78 of the Department of Defense as well as Special Operations
79 Command and Central Command; Department of Justice agencies such
80 as the Federal Bureau of Investigations, the Bureau of Alcohol,
81 Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, and the Drug Enforcement
82 Administration; Department of Homeland Security agencies such as
83 the United States Customs and Border Protection, the United
84 States Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and the United
85 States Coast Guard; and city, county, and state law enforcement
86 agencies, and

87 WHEREAS, the S.S. American Victory is visited by tens of
88 thousands of guests annually and acts as an educational platform
89 for Tampa Bay's seven-county area as well as throughout this
90 state, including AMIkids, the Jefferson High School Maritime and
91 Marine Exploration Academy, the Howard W. Blake High School
92 Maritime Program, the University of South Florida College of
93 Arts and Sciences and Muma College of Business, and various
94 other public schools and home education programs, and

95 WHEREAS, the S.S. American Victory serves as the homebase
96 for the American Victory Division and other regional Sea Cadet,
97 Boy and Girl Scout, and ROTC programs, and

WHEREAS, the S.S. American Victory also hosts international programs such as the training ship GUNILLA, a Swedish vessel that circumnavigates the globe as an international educational platform, and

WHEREAS, the S.S. American Victory is a maritime museum and memorial that is open year-round for visitors of all ages, from across the United States and abroad, supporting Florida's vibrant tourism industry, and

WHEREAS, due to its service to the United States and past 25-year history of service to this state, the official state flagship is redesignated as the S.S. American Victory, NOW, THEREFORE,

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

Section 1. Section 15.0465, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

15.0465 Official state flagship.—The S.S. American Victory, a 455-foot historic steamship, built in 1944 ~~schooner Western Union, a 130-foot historic sailing vessel of the tall ship class, built in Key West and first launched in 1939~~, is designated the official state flagship.

Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2026.