

The Bill to rename office of the head of the Navy Department "The Secretary of the Navy and Marine Corps"

Statement by Dan Howard, former Under Secretary of the Navy, 1989-93

For over two hundred years our nation has been well served by a Navy Department and its secretariat that administers two separate military services, the only military department to do so. The Bill would change the name of the office of the Secretary of the Navy to that of Secretary of the Navy and Marine Corps. The Bill would make no other changes to the way in which the Department administers the two services. I believe that this largely symbolic change is important in its own right. It would allow the Secretary to present himself as the equal sponsor of both of these great services. If the House chooses to act positively on this matter it will not be the first time that it has engaged in providing symbols that the warfighters consider to be of value. The official seal of the Marines, now so familiar to all, is not that old. The fact that we now have a seal for the Department as a whole and two seals for the Department's two services is the result of a long campaign and the action of the Congress in making it so.

Administratively the Commandant of the Marine Corps is in no way subordinate to the Chief of Naval Operations. Neither is the Marine Corps a part of the United States Navy. These are the facts, but any poll would reveal much confusion on this point even among many otherwise well informed citizens. I honor the world's greatest Navy. This is the greatest Navy the world has ever known. I do not believe that any of the sponsors of this proposed legislation intends any criticism or slight of the United States Navy. No one wishes to undercut the power, authority or span of control of the Navy. Otherwise I could not support the Bill. I served with pride in the Marine Corps, but I worked side-by-side with Sailors doing precisely the same job. I respected my teammates as equals. My late father-in-law landed on Saipan and Tinian as a Marine. My son is a Department of the Navy scientist. My son-in-law is a Naval Academy graduate and is currently serving proudly as a United States Navy F/A-18 pilot. We are truly a Navy-Marine Corps team family. Both of these great services are accorded all due respect around our house. However, I have noticed that almost all of those who actively promote the virtues and synergy provided by the Navy-Marine Corps Team are Marines. There is certainly good cooperation between these two services. The dialogue between the CNO and Commandant is frequent and positive. The three-way communication with the Secretary is also reportedly very solid. However, I believe that this simple name change in the Secretariat would allow the Secretary (and Under Secretary) to better present the office of the Secretary as representing both of these great services equally. On many occasions during my tenure as Under Secretary I was introduced at Marine events as the "Under Secretary of the Navy and Marine Corps" or even as "Under Secretary of the Marine Corps". It was always done with a little humor, but I often detected a yearning on the Marines' part that this was the official title. I even have desk nameplates, flight jacket name tags, baseball caps and coffee mugs with this title on them.

I urge the Committee to support this Bill and make official what is clearly the de facto case today. The Secretary of the Navy is already the Secretary of both the United States Navy and the United States Marine Corps in every way except under Title 10, U.S. Code.