

Public Law 109–142
109th Congress

Joint Resolution

Recognizing Commodore John Barry as the first flag officer of the United States Navy.

Dec. 22, 2005

[H.J. Res. 38]

- Whereas John Barry, American merchant marine captain and native of County Wexford, Ireland, volunteered his services to the Continental Navy during the American War for Independence and was assigned by the Continental Congress as captain of the Lexington, taking command of that vessel on March 14, 1776, and later participating in the victorious Trenton campaign;
- Whereas the quality and effectiveness of Captain John Barry's service to the American war effort was recognized not only by George Washington but also by the enemies of the new Nation;
- Whereas Captain John Barry rejected British General Lord Howe's flattering offer to desert Washington and the patriot cause, stating: "Not the value and command of the whole British fleet can lure me from the cause of my country.";
- Whereas Captain John Barry, while in command of the frigate Alliance, successfully transported French gold to America to help finance the American War for Independence and also won numerous victories at sea;
- Whereas when the First Congress, acting under the new Constitution of the United States, authorized the raising and construction of the United States Navy, it was to Captain John Barry that President George Washington turned to build and lead the new Nation's infant Navy, the successor to the Continental Navy of the War for Independence;
- Whereas Captain John Barry supervised the building of his flagship, the U.S.S. United States;
- Whereas on February 22, 1797, President Washington personally conferred upon Captain John Barry, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, the rank of Captain, with "Commission No. 1", United States Navy, dated June 7, 1794;
- Whereas John Barry served as the senior officer of the United States Navy, with the title of "Commodore" (in official correspondence), under Presidents Washington, John Adams, and Jefferson;
- Whereas as commander of the first United States naval squadron under the Constitution of the United States, which included the U.S.S. Constitution ("Old Ironsides"), John Barry was a Commodore, with the right to fly a broad pendant, which made him a flag officer; and

Whereas in this sense it can be said that Commodore John Barry was the first flag officer of the United States Navy: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That Commodore John Barry is recognized, and is hereby honored, as the first flag officer of the United States Navy.

Approved December 22, 2005.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY—H.J. Res. 38:

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, Vol. 151 (2005):

Dec. 14, considered and passed House.

Dec. 16, considered and passed Senate.