

A Resolution for Veterans' Administration Purple Heart Benefits for Recipients of the World War II Mariners Medal

WHEREAS, the World War II U.S. Merchant Marine made victory possible by being the *First to go into Action* with 243 Killed in Action prior to Pearl Harbor and amongst the first Prisoners of War and were also the *Last to Return* with 54 ships damaged by mines with in theater loss of life after V-E and V-J Day;

WHEREAS, the U.S. Merchant Marine suffered the *Highest Casualty Rate* with 1 in 26 Killed in Action to include 1,500 ships sunk, 9,300 mariners killed, and 12,000 wounded;

WHEREAS, the U.S. Merchant Marine *Delivered the Men and Material* that made victory possible, participating in every invasion from Normandy to Okinawa and U.S. Merchant Mariners *Manned the Ships* by being recruited and trained by the U.S. Maritime Service, increasing from 55,000 to a wartime high of 250,000 seamen with 114,145 mariners receiving the Merchant Marine Combat Bar for service under enemy attack;

WHEREAS, U.S. Merchant Mariners were *Denied Veteran Benefits* to include unemployment, education, home or small business loans, priority of postwar jobs and medical care for disabilities;

WHEREAS, U.S. Merchant Mariners *Struggled for Veteran Status* and finally received veterans status in 1988, over 40 years after the end of the war;

WHEREAS, the Mariners Medal per Public Law 52 of the 78th Congress was awarded to any person, who while serving on any vessel in the American merchant marine during the World War II period, was wounded, suffered physical injury, or suffered through dangerous exposure as a result of an act of an enemy of the United States;

WHEREAS, 6,635 U.S. Merchant Mariners were awarded the Mariners Medal in World War II and 26 U.S. Merchant Mariners were awarded the Purple Heart in World War II;

WHEREAS, U.S. Representative Rep. Jeffrey Fortenberry [R-NE] has sponsored House Resolution 447 of the 110th Congress to amend Title 38, United States Code, to provide that World War II merchant mariners who were awarded the Mariners Medal shall be provided eligibility for the Department of Veterans Affairs health care on the same basis as veterans who have been awarded the Purple Heart;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Apostleship of the Sea of the United States of America meeting during its 2008 AOS-USA Annual Conference at the MITAGS Center in Linthicum, MD, expresses its most sincere support for H.R. 447 of the 110th Congress to pass bill for VA health care for recipients of the Mariners Medal on the same basis as veterans who have been awarded the Purple Heart.