

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

February 18, 2021

The Honorable Thomas W. Harker  
Acting Secretary of the Navy  
1200 Navy Pentagon  
Washington, DC 2350-1200

Dear Acting Secretary Harker:

We are writing to you about the United States Navy's plan to scrap the USS Bonhomme Richard (LHD 6), an 844-foot-long Wasp-class amphibious assault ship that sustained major fire damage last year and is unable to return to service.

After considering options to repair the ship that were deemed too costly, the United States Navy recently announced it will decommission the USS Bonhomme Richard. According to an article in the U.S. Naval Institute, the Navy is projected to spend approximately \$30 million in preparation to scrap the ship.<sup>1</sup> Instead of sending it to scrap, we are hoping you will consider an alternative approach that would provide environmental and economic benefits and allow the legacy of the USS Bonhomme Richard to continue.

We respectfully ask that the United States Navy consider preparing and sinking it off the coast of Florida where, as an artificial reef, it could become an environmental and economic benefit to the local community and state. The USS Bonhomme Richard is an ideal candidate for artificial reefing and would be welcomed by the people of Florida.

The State of Florida is well-positioned to be home to the USS Bonhomme Richard. We have existing active federal permits for artificial reef construction, including several areas in the waters off Miami, permitted for large vessel reefing. We also have stakeholders, communities, and community-based organizations that are ready to embrace it. In addition to our anglers and divers, we have visitors to the state year-round who fish and dive in our waters, eat at our restaurants, stay in our hotels, and spend money at our small businesses that serve the tourism industry.

Importantly, we have previous experience turning ships into artificial reefs. Multiple former U.S. Navy ships are artificial reefs off our coast: the USS Spiegel Grove off Key Largo, the USS Oriskany off Pensacola, and the USS Mindanao off Daytona Beach. These ships created an instant ecosystem for fish and wildlife, created brand new recreational fishing destinations for anglers, provided a water wonderland to divers, boosted local and state economies, and increased military maritime heritage visibility for military veterans and historians. We are pleased to report that these benefits continue today.

Finally, based on the state's experience, we believe that the U.S. Navy will spend significantly less than \$30 million and be able to proceed in an expedited timeline to sink it in Florida as an artificial reef. It is our hope that you will send the USS Bonhomme Richard to Florida where its story and legacy can continue.

Thank you for considering our request.

Sincerely,



Maria Elvira Salazar  
Member of Congress



Darren Soto  
Member of Congress



Stephanie Murphy  
Member of Congress



W. Gregory Steube  
Member of Congress



Matt Gaetz  
Member of Congress



Michael Waltz  
Member of Congress



Alcee L. Hastings  
Member of Congress



Carlos A. Gimenez  
Member of Congress




Vern Buchanan  
Member of Congress



Charlie Crist  
Member of Congress



Brian Mast  
Member of Congress



Neal P. Dunn, M.D.  
Member of Congress



Bill Posey  
Member of Congress



Mario Diaz-Balart  
Member of Congress



Al Lawson  
Member of Congress



Kat Cammack  
Member of Congress



John Rutherford  
Member of Congress



Scott Franklin  
Member of Congress



Gus Bilirakis  
Member of Congress



Debbie Wasserman Schultz  
Member of Congress

/s/

Daniel Webster  
Member of Congress



Val Demings  
Member of Congress