
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
335 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Date: _____

Dear Chairman Takano & members of the 116th Congress House Committee on Veterans' Affairs:

This letter is in support of **H.R. 154: The Honoring Our Merchant Mariners of WWII Act of 2019**, introduced by Rep. Al Green (D-TX).

I am a citizen of the United States who is most concerned with our own government's treatment of U.S. WWII Merchant Mariners over the past seven decades. I ask for your committee to support this bill. It is time to recognize the men who helped finally win World War II.

During WWII, the United States Merchant Marine transported the supplies, fuel, and manpower required to defeat the Axis. However, this job was not completed without unspeakable losses in terms of both vessels and human lives. Here are some common WWII U.S. Merchant Marine statistics to consider: 250,000 merchant seamen served in WWII; 8,241 of them were killed; thousands more were injured; dozens were captured and tortured as POW's; over 1,500 merchant vessels were sunk (733 of them over 100 gross tons). The U.S. Merchant Marine transported over 7 million servicemen overseas. It was the only non-segregated service and over 10% of the seamen were African-American.

When the war ended, U.S. servicemen arrived home to victory parades and recognition of their efforts. Meanwhile, the Merchant Marine continued the important service of transporting troops home and carrying materials to rebuild war stricken countries.

Many American seamen joined the Merchant Marine because they were too old, too young, or deemed medically unfit to serve in the military. FDR promised this group Veteran status and benefits similar to the GI Bill, but that promise died with him. It was not until 1988 that our WWII Merchant Mariners were officially recognized as Veterans. By this time, they were at or near retirement age and could not capitalize on a benefit package that arrived 40+ years too late.

Legislation has existed since 2005 to correct this injustice by compensating these men for their service and sacrifice. In fact, such legislation passed the House in both the 110th & 111th Congress (H.R. 23). The latest version is **H.R. 154**, which provides for a one-time payout of \$25,000 to compensate these brave men for a lifetime of missed opportunities. WWII Filipino Scouts were recognized with benefits in 2009 and a Congressional Gold Medal last year. The Merchant Marine veterans still wait.

I ask for your support of **H.R. 154** for these unsung heroes from World War II.

Sincerely,