

ORANGE COUNTY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

ACTION AGENDA ITEM ABSTRACT  
Meeting Date: June 16, 2009

Action Agenda  
Item No. 4-gg

**SUBJECT:** Resolution Supporting An Alternative Method of Recognizing Veterans Status  
for Merchant Marine Seamen from World War II

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**DEPARTMENT:** County Manager

**PUBLIC HEARING:** (Y/N)

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**ATTACHMENT(S):**

Draft Resolution with Attachment  
Letter of Request

**INFORMATION CONTACT:**

Laura Blackmon, 245-2300

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**PURPOSE:** To approve a Resolution Supporting An Alternative Method of Recognizing  
Veterans Status for Merchant Marine Seamen from World War II.

**BACKGROUND:** Some Commissioners were recently contacted and asked if the Board would  
consider adopting a resolution supporting an alternative method of recognizing veterans status  
for merchant marine seamen from World War II. Records that would otherwise provide the  
required basis for this recognition were discarded by the National Maritime Administration due  
to their volume and limited use.

North Carolina counties including Camden, Currituck, Pasquotank, Perquimans, and Wilson  
have adopted resolutions similar to the one attached. Beaufort, Chowan, Craven, Dare, Duplin,  
Gates, Granville, Greene, Hertford, Jones, Lenoir, Nash, Martin, Pitt and Washington counties  
have also recently considered and/or adopted a similar resolution.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** There is no financial impact associated with adoption of the resolution.

**RECOMMENDATION(S):** The Manager recommends the Board adopt the Resolution  
Supporting An Alternative Method of Recognizing Veterans Status for Merchant Marine  
Seamen from World War II and authorize the Chair to sign the resolution.

**ORANGE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

**RESOLUTION SUPPORTING AN ALTERNATIVE METHOD OF  
RECOGNIZING VETERANS STATUS FOR MERCHANT MARINE SEAMEN  
FROM WORLD WAR II**

WHEREAS, Public Laws 95-202 and 105-368 bestowed veteran status on US Merchant Marine Seamen of World War II; and

WHEREAS, two specific U.S. government actions have caused some 10,000 merchant seamen to have been denied their due recognition:

- (1) The United States Coast Guard relieved Masters of tugs, towboats and seagoing barges of the responsibility for submitting reports of seamen shipped and discharged and
- (2) The National Maritime Administration ordered ships' logbooks to be destroyed because they were too costly to maintain and removed the two main criteria required by the government to issue official recognition to those seamen; and

WHEREAS, the average age of the remaining seamen is over 86 years of age and the US veterans' population is shrinking at an average of 850 per year causing time to be of the essence; and

WHEREAS, no costs are associated with this proposal as funds are already included in above public laws; and

WHEREAS, the Orange County Board of Commissioners desires that action be taken to address this concern;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that we, the Orange County Board of Commissioners, support the attached proposal and forward this Resolution and attached proposal to Senator Kay Hagan, Senator Richard Burr, and Congressman David Price encouraging that this matter addressed.

Adopted this 16<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2009.

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Valerie P. Foushee, Chair  
Orange County Board of Commissioners

**PROPOSAL**

Committee: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal Author: \_\_\_\_\_

Bill No: \_\_\_\_\_

Delegation: \_\_\_\_\_

**Title: Alternative Methods of Recognition for Veteran Status to Merchant Marine Seamen of WW II**

Be It Enacted by the one hundred &amp; eleventh Congress of the United States

1. **Preamble:** Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of
2. America in congress assembled; Public Law 95-202 & 105-368 provided veteran status for members
3. of the U.S Merchant Marine who served during WW II between 07 Dec, 1941 and 31 Dec, 1946 and
4. who were able to prove their service. Various actions by governmental personnel have destroyed or
5. caused these documents to be unavailable. These actions prohibit merchant marine veterans of
6. WW II from receiving the recognition and benefits of veteran's status provided by these laws.
7. Alternative methods to prove service are required, as just compensation, for records lost by
8. government actions.
  
9. **SECTION 1:** Records held by the Social Security Administration that denote dates, wages earned and
10. companies employed shall be utilized when USCG forms 718 (any date) or other official data such
11. as ship's logbook, etc, are not available.
  
12. **SECTION 2:** Validated testimony from the veteran or primary next of kin as to employment shall be
13. allowed to determine eligibility; and
  
14. **SECTION 3:** Other official documentation offered by the veteran, shall constitute replacement of
15. records that were destroyed or from other actions causing the required records to be unavailable
16. that were committed by those responsible for the control and maintenance of veteran records.
  
17. **SECTION 4:** For the timeframe between 07 December, 1941 and 31 December, 1946, masters of
18. seagoing vessels shall be recognized as agents of the United States authorized to document
19. crew members as it applies to the shipping and discharge of seaman for purposes of employment.
  
20. **SECTION 5:** These replacements records shall satisfy all requirements for eligibility of service during
21. the required timeframe 07 December, 1941 and 31 December, 1946.
  
22. **SECTION 6:** This bill will go into effect 91 days after passage.

James D. Horton  
104 Riverview Ave  
Camden NC 27921  
18 May, 2009

Dear Members of Board of County Commissioners of North Carolina,

I need help in assisting some 10,000 U. S. Merchant Marine seamen from WW II to gain recognition as veterans under P.L. 92-202 & 105-368. Because of shortsightedness of **two** government actions they are being **denied** eligibility as veterans and therefore VA benefits are not available to them. These actions that prevented them from gaining recognition occurred before the Public Laws were in force.

- (1) On 20 Mar, 1944, the Commandant issued orders to masters of tugs, towboats and seagoing barges of the requirement for submitting reports of seamen shipped and discharged on form (718), the same one now required to prove employment for eligibility.
- (2) USCG Reference Information Paper # 77 states "After world War II, the deck and engineering logbooks of vessels operated by the War Shipping Administration (WSA) were turned over to that agency by the ship owners for safekeeping, and were later destroyed by the Maritime Administration, in the 1970s, on the grounds that they were voluminous, costly to house and service and very seldom used for research"
- (3) Further, this same official USCG document #77, indicates that the three documents required to receive eligibility were (a) shipping and discharge certificates Form (718), (b) ship's deck logs, and (c) paperwork from the company bearing the name of the seaman, ship and destination. Note: I doubt the latter ever happened as it was against regulations to publicize destination of vessel. Remember the WW II slogan" loose lips, sink ships"?

Because of government actions removing two of the three documents from the veteran and the third document being impossible to obtain since companies have long since been lost to history, **alternative methods of providing acceptable information must be made.**

Therefore, I am calling on all commissioners of the 100 counties in North Carolina to stand high and support a resolution, such as has been presented by my County of Camden, to show their patriotic support for those that answered the call. They delivered the goods when it was necessary to keep this country safe from all who challenged. We owe them and this is the least that we can do. I am counting on you and I know you will come through. Let us tell congress we haven't forgotten those who helped us and we want them to press on as our veterans are leaving us at the rate of 850 per year. We can't wait much longer to honor those that are still alive and, as important; we can now say we have finally thanked them for a job well done. To date, these counties have taken the lead and signed off on the resolution, **Camden, Currituck, Pasquotank, Perquimans and Wilson. Many others are scheduled for 18/20 May.** This should complete 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> districts. Districts 2 & 7 are planned for this request.

Please develop and approve your resolution and send originals (4 or 5) to me so that I can offer them by district, as a package to each of our Congressional Representatives. (Senators Richard Burr & Kay Hagan, & your respective House Representative (s)). Due to timing of meetings and distances, I am unable to meet with individual counties in preparation of resolutions. Thanking you in advance.

Very Respectfully,

James D. Horton  
252 336 5553