



Legislation Text

File #: Res 0649-2024, **Version:** A

Res. No. 649-A

Resolution calling on the United States Congress to pass, and the President to sign, legislation allocating funds for the restoration of the SS *United States* and for its relocation to the City of New York

By Council Members Brewer, Abreu, Bottcher, Marte, Williams, Louis, Gutiérrez, Nurse, Banks, Krishnan, Lee, Schulman, Holden, Feliz, Brooks-Powers and Farías

Whereas, Ocean liners are passenger ships, with strong exterior hulls able to withstand rough ocean waters, which operate on a fixed schedule to transport people, mail, and other cargo across long distances of open oceans, typically from one continent to another continent and back; and

Whereas, The SS *United States*, a steam-powered ocean liner, began service in 1952 to transport passengers and cargo between the cities of New York, Southampton, Le Havre, and occasionally Bremerhaven; and

Whereas, At 990 feet long, the SS *United States* is the longest steam-powered passenger ship constructed entirely in the United States (U.S.), making it 107 feet longer than the Belfast-built *Titanic*; and

Whereas, The SS *United States* was the last recipient of the Blue Riband, an unofficial accolade for the fastest maritime transatlantic travel by a passenger ship; and

Whereas, The SS *United States* completed its maiden voyage from New York Harbor to Bishop Rock in the United Kingdom in 3 days, 10 hours, and 40 minutes, beating the previous record holder by 10 hours and 2 minutes; and

Whereas, During its tenure as an ocean liner for the private company United States Lines, the SS *United States* transported many New York celebrities, including Edward Kennedy “Duke” Ellington and Leonard Bernstein; and

Whereas, According to the Smithsonian Institution’s National Air and Space Museum, in 1957, transatlantic commercial aviation’s popularity eclipsed the popularity of transatlantic ocean liners; and

Whereas, With the decline in SS *United States* transatlantic ridership, the SS *United States* operated briefly as a cruise ship between New York and the Caribbean; and

Whereas, In 1969, the SS *United States* was sold, and since then its ownership has changed several times, with each transfer accompanied by a failed venture to repurpose the vessel as a luxury cruise ship or timeshare condominiums; and

Whereas, In 1992, the SS *United States* Conservancy (“the Conservancy”), a not-for-profit organization, was created with a mission to preserve the ocean liner as a stationary mixed-use destination with an on-board museum; and

Whereas, In 1999, through the Conservancy’s efforts, the ocean liner was recognized as a historic site and listed on the National Register of Historic Places; and

Whereas, In 2011, the Conservancy raised sufficient funds to purchase the SS *United States* and negotiated an agreement with Penn Warehousing and Distribution, Incorporated (P.W.D.) regarding docking fees at its pier in Philadelphia; and

Whereas, In 2021, P.W.D. increased the docking fee and terminated the agreement with the Conservancy when the Conservancy declined to pay the increased fee; and

Whereas, The disagreement led to lawsuits, resulting in the court’s ordering the Conservancy to remove the SS *United States* from P.W.D.’s pier after almost 30 years; and

Whereas, The SS *United States* was facing a fate of being sold for scrap metal when it was purchased by Okaloosa County, Florida, to become part of an artificial reef off the Florida coast, along with more than 20 other large vessels already sunk there; and

Whereas, The purpose of the artificial reef of sunken vessels is to improve the marine habitat as well as to provide tourism opportunities; and

Whereas, The preparations for sinking the SS *United States* are almost complete, with the remaining steps to be taken by early 2026, including certifying that the remaining fuel tanks are clean, removing all nonmetal items, and cutting holes strategically throughout the ocean liner; and

Whereas, Okaloosa County and the Conservancy are working to establish a land-based museum in Destin-Fort Walton Beach to preserve the story of the SS *United States* and to provide an interactive experience for museum visitors; and

Whereas, New York is the original home of the SS *United States* and is now home to many of our nation's historic ships, such as the aircraft carrier USS *Intrepid*, the lightship *Frying Pan*, the fireboat *John J. Harvey*, and the 19th century tall ship *Wavertree*; and

Whereas, Allowing the SS *United States* to be sunk off the Florida coast would be a missed opportunity to add a new public space and maritime museum for New Yorkers to enjoy as well as a missed opportunity to educate New Yorkers about maritime history; and

Whereas, The U.S. Congress has the authority and resources to pass legislation to preserve the SS *United States* so that it can be enjoyed by future generations of Americans; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls on the United States Congress to pass, and the President to sign, legislation allocating funds for the restoration of the SS *United States* and for its relocation to the City of New York.

DJS/RHP
LS #17703
12/15/2025