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Last Updated: 05/23/2023



National Maritime Day, 1988

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

National Maritime Day reminds us that the American merchant marine has always been essential to our national security and economic growth—and reminds us as well that the men and women of the merchant marine deserve our gratitude every day. The importance of the merchant marine to our national defense was never more clear than in World War II, when, at a cost of more than 6,000 lives and with the loss of 733 ships, the American merchant marine never faltered in delivering cargo for our Armed Forces throughout the world. Earlier this year, these merchant seafarers received veteran status for their valiant service.

Today, the merchant marine continues its roles in trade and defense—and the sailors of our commercial fleets continue to exhibit the patriotism and the many skills that have ever characterized them and their predecessors. It is truly fitting that we pause to salute these seafarers and all other Americans who support them and guard the lifelines of the sea that sustain us all.

In recognition of the importance of the merchant marine, the Congress, by joint resolution approved May 20, 1933, has designated May 22 of each year as "National Maritime Day" and authorized and requested the President to issue annually a proclamation calling for its appropriate observance. This date was chosen to commemorate the day in 1819 when SS SAVANNAH left Savannah, Georgia, on the first transatlantic steamship voyage.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim May 22, 1988, as National Maritime Day. I urge the people of the United States to observe this day by displaying the flag of the United States at their homes and other suitable places, and I request that all ships sailing under the American flag dress ship on that day.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this ninth day of May, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twelfth.

Ronald Reagan