

of H.R. 5671, the “Merchant Mariners of World War II Congressional Gold Medal Act of 2020”, a bill that recognizes World War II merchant mariner veterans with congressional gold medals for their service to the United States.

I am a strong proponent of our veteran population having the recognition they deserve for their bravery, honor, valor and sacrifice.

Throughout World War II, our armed forces relied on the Merchant Marine to provide combat equipment, fuel, food, commodities and raw materials to troops stationed abroad in both theaters of operation, and they paid a heavy price in service to their country.

The Merchant Marine is a war essential supply chain that transports the nation’s cargoes in times of peace and prosperity, and in times of war and grave danger.

Military missions and war planning are contingent upon the availability of resources and the Merchant Marine played a vital role in this regard.

The Merchant Marine provided for the successful transport of resources and personnel despite consistent and ongoing exposure to enemy combatants from both the air and the sea, including from enemy bomber squadrons, submarines, and naval mines.

The Merchant Marines were the best informed and most widely traveled, constantly supplying the front-line troops until they could break through German, Japanese and Italian aggression to secure victory.

The Merchant Marine suffered the highest per capita casualty rate in the U.S. Armed Forces during World War II.

An estimated 8,300 mariners lost their lives, and another 12,000 were wounded during WWII.

The Merchant Marine proved to be an instrumental asset on an untold number of occasions, participating in every landing operation by the United States Marine Corps, from Guadalcanal to Okinawa.

Merchant Marines were engaged in the longest battle of the war—the Battle of the At-

lantic, fought over the vital supply lines to Europe—and they fought longer than any other branch of the service.

These mariners have waited over 70 years to get the recognition they earned braving the perils of the Atlantic during the Second World War.

There are 1.5 million veterans living in Texas and each of them deserve recognition for their service and sacrifice for this nation.

Approximately 16 million Americans served in World War II and have come to receive veteran status after the somber duration, but victorious conclusion of the war.

More than a quarter million, 250,000 thousand civilian sailors, served in the U.S. Merchant Marine by the end of the war.

Despite their honorable, vital and heroic service in wartime, the men of the U.S. merchant marine were not officially accorded veteran status until 1988, decades following the end of World War II.

The feats and accomplishments of the Merchant Marine are deserving of broader public recognition.

Unfortunately, the courageous contribution of the Merchant Mariners sacrifices are commonly overlooked.

Every American owes these mariners a debt of gratitude we cannot begin to repay.

The Congressional Gold Medal would be an appropriate way to shed further light on the service of the merchant mariners in World War II and the instrumental role they played in winning that war.

I ask my colleagues from both sides of the aisle to vote in support of H.R. 5671.

HONORING RAYMOND LERMA

HON. TJ COX

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 28, 2020

Mr. COX of California. Madam Speaker, I rise today in honor of Raymond Lerma, a be-

loved husband, father, and leader in the community of Corcoran, California. Ray passed away on January 11th. Among his many honored roles in life, Ray served 25 years as Mayor and Councilmember in Corcoran and was a pillar of the community.

Ray was born in El Paso, Texas and raised in Corcoran in a large and loving family that worked hard, long days in the fields of the Central Valley. Encouraged by his parents to reach for higher education, Mr. Lerma graduated from UC Berkeley—he was a proud CAL Bear.

After college, Ray returned to the community that raised him to build his own family with his beloved wife Lola. He touched countless lives in his 38 years as an educator at Corcoran High School. He also kept changing lives after retirement, teaching English as a second language to adult learners. Ray also served as a longtime board member of the Kings Community Action Organization, which helps bring resources to the Central Valley.

Ray once said that he wanted to be remembered as someone who made a difference in his community. I stand before you today to say we will always remember his dedication and contributions to the community, and we will miss his leadership.

Raymond Lerma leaves behind his wife Lola, their three children, Eva, Ramon, and Pablo, as well as his grandchildren.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. BRETT GUTHRIE

OF KENTUCKY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 28, 2020

Mr. GUTHRIE. Madam Speaker, I was out of the chamber. Had I been present, I would have voted YEA on Roll Call No. 24.