

March 25, 2009

**AN INVITATION TO CO-SPONSOR H.R. 23
“BELATED THANK YOU TO THE MERCHANT
MARINERS OF WORLD WAR II ACT of 2009”**

Dear Colleague:

During the 110th Congress, the “Belated Thank You to the Merchant Mariners of World War II Act”, H.R. 23, enjoyed the support of 244 cosponsors. Since so many of these brave men are dying every day, the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs agreed on a modified version of H.R. 23 that would still provide monthly payments to these veterans for their unrecognized service, but would make the payments subject to appropriations. This version was passed unanimously by the full House by voice vote, but the Senate did not schedule it for consideration. Therefore, I am re-introducing the same version previously passed in the House for the 111th Congress. The number remains the same--H.R. 23--and I hope it again will enjoy your support.

As you know, Merchant Mariners were an integral part of our victory in World War II. They suffered the highest casualty rate of any of the branches of service while delivering troops, tanks, food, airplanes, fuel and other needed supplies to every theater of the war. Without the services of the Merchant Mariners, it would have been very difficult, if not impossible, to have won World War II.

Unfortunately, they were denied any benefits under the GI Bill of Rights. The Merchant Mariners became the forgotten service. It wasn’t until 1988, after protracted court battles that they were given any benefits and, even then, they did not receive the benefits of many portions of the GI Bill. H.R. 23 would provide a modest payment for the 40-plus years of lost benefits which denied many of them the opportunity to attain a degree, obtain a home loan, or receive compensation for their service-connected injuries like other WWII veterans.

Please continue your support of the Merchant Mariners of WWII by co-sponsoring H.R. 23! To sign on to H.R. 23, you may call or email Megan Williams at x59164 or megan.williams@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,

BOB FILNER
Chairman