

USS IOWA SSN-797

Commissioning Committee, PO Box 1968, Cedar Rapids, IA 52406



Commissioning Committee Newsletter

2020 – # 24

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www.USSIowaSSN797.org

Officers

- Sponsor: Ms. Christie Vilsack
- Chairman: Peter B. Welch, CAPT, SC, USNR (ret)

“A good Navy is not a provocation to war. It is the surest guaranty of peace.”

- Theodore Roosevelt

“Of all the branches ... in the forces, there is none which shows more devotion and faces grimmer perils than the Submariners.”

- Sir Winston Churchill

Below is the letter that was submitted to the key lead persons at the Iowa Legislature in the Senate and House. We may not get any traction during this likely shortened pandemic session but I wanted to bring this request up so they would be familiar with it. We had hoped to have the CO of the boat make a personal visit to the Legislature and perhaps even address a joint session of the Legislature. The Iowa CO is willing to do the visit and the Commission would sponsor and pay for his visit, but DOD has Covid travel restrictions in place that make a visit possible before the Legislature adjourn very unlikely. If anyone receiving this newsletter has any good contacts and friends that serve in the Iowa Legislature, then please let them know about our request for funding. And if they are interested in personally meeting the Iowa Commanding Officer for a photo opportunity while he is visiting the capital, then let me know and I will help him make the rounds.

January 29, 2021

RE: USS Iowa SSN-797

Dear Senator Kraayenbrink and Representative Mohr:

By way of introduction I am the Chairman of the USS Iowa SSN-797 Commissioning Committee. The next United States Naval Warship to bear the name of Iowa is currently under construction in Groton, Connecticut at the Electric Boat shipyard. The Virginia class fast attack submarine is a product of the only two shipyard building capable submarine shipyards, with one being Electric Boat in Groton, Connecticut and the other being Newport News in Virginia.

At this time the submarine is past the 50% completion and a good number of the crew members have been assigned. The submarine Iowa is in the fourth grouping of Virginia fast attack submarines and will be the very first fast attack submarine with specifically designed quarters for women officers and sailors. The submarine Iowa will be the fourth commissioned warship to carry the proud name of our state.

The USS Iowa is currently scheduled to be christened in the fall of 2021. The christening takes place when the sponsor breaks the bottle over the ship and it is a significant ceremony in the building of a ship. Following the christening, the submarine will be tested and endure sea trials and in approximately a year after the christening the "official commissioning" will take place. At that point in time the crew runs aboard the vessel and the USS Iowa becomes officially a member of the United States Navy active fleet.

One of the functions of the Commissioning Committee is to support these two major events and to provide additional support to enhance the conditions of life that the crew lives aboard the vessel. Some of the things we provide are not capable of being done with tax payer funded dollars. Examples include welcome mats at the end of the ship's brow when they tie up pier-side or enhanced curtains in and around the bunks where the sailors sleep that cut down on noise and increase privacy. Ship's entertainment machines such as movies and stereos are not provided by taxpayer dollars. Other expenses also include the ceremonies and the costs associated with the official christening and commissioning ceremonies. If there are any left-over funds after the process of commissioning is complete, then the Commissioning Committee turns

into a permanent charitable organization that will provide college scholarship assistance to children of the sailors serving aboard the USS Iowa, and if no sailors' children apply for benefits, then the scholarships would roll over to provide assistance to Naval ROTC students at Iowa State University. With this in mind, we would like to ask Iowa State Legislature to approve and pass a bill to support the Commissioning Committee to the tune of \$100,000. This very same amount that we are requesting would be the same as have been provided by the states of Delaware, Illinois, South Dakota, and Minnesota.

I am hopeful that at some time in the future while the Legislature is in session that I would be able to have the current Commanding Officer of the USS Iowa SSN-797, CDR Quintin James, visit the Capital and meet everyone personally and perhaps even address a joint session. But for now the Department of Defense has implemented Covid travel restrictions which make that currently not possible.

I would be happy to visit with each of you further concerning this and I will be sending this communication to you both by email and regular US mail. However, the US mail copy will have patches and decals of the Commissioning Committee enclosed.

Very respectfully,

Peter B. Welch, CAPT, SC, USNR (ret)
Chairman USS Iowa Commissioning Committee
Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Iowa nice Iowa strong

Electric Boat Shipyard Update

The submarine being built at Electric Boat ahead of us is the Hyman G. Rickover SSN-795. She will be christened and commissioned before the Iowa goes through those same events. I have contacted my counter-part on the Rickover Commissioning Committee and will be attending both of their ceremonies with the hope of learning how to smoothly get through the ceremonies. The Rickover christening looks to be around the 15th of May. And while the Iowa's christening was originally to be this fall, it now looks to have slipped into the first couple months of 2022 and would be at the Electric Boat shipyard in Groton, Connecticut.

Zoom Chat

Sometime over the next two months we would like to have a Zoom meeting of the Committee and have the Iowa Commanding Officer and other select Iowa crew participate. There are some scheduling issues to overcome as the Iowa crew members cannot attend a Zoom conference from within the shipyard and the USS Iowa offices.

NOTE: People on the newsletter list that would like to receive some of the Iowa Commissioning decals should respond to this newsletter with their mailing addresses.

PBW