

July 8, 2013

The Honorable G.K Butterfield
2305 Rayburn House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Butterfield:

On behalf of more than 380,000 MOAA members, I am writing to thank you for your leadership in introducing your bi-partisan bill, **H.R. 1288, the World War II Merchant Mariner Service Act.**

Your legislation expands and clarifies the types of documentation for determining veterans status of certain "coastwise merchant seamen" (Merchant Mariners) during World War II, and for other purposes.

The GI Bill Improvement Act of 1977 (Public Law 95-202) provided that the Secretary of Defense could determine that service for the Armed Forces by organized groups of civilians, or contractors, be considered 'active service' for benefits administered by the Veterans Administration.

In the case of World War II Merchant Marines, documenting their service has been difficult due to wartime security restrictions, destroyed ship logs and unavailable merchant mariner documents known as a Z-card. Your bill provides additional methods of documenting such service for consideration as active service by the secretary of Veterans Affairs.

H.R. 1288 would authorize burial benefits; medals, ribbons and decorations; and status as a veteran (with no additional benefits) for Merchant Mariners who provide appropriate documentation under the bill. The bill also permits a primary next-of-kin of deceased WWII Merchant Mariners to submit evidence on their behalf of service to the United States.

MOAA supports the World War II Merchant Mariner Act (H.R. 1288) and recommends passage into law at the earliest opportunity.

Sincerely, *Best Regards!*

Norbert Ryan