The American Legion

OFFICE OF THE
NATIONAL COMMANDER

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Honorable Gus Bilirakis
United States House of Representitives
407 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Congressman Bilirakis:

On behalf of the 2.4 million members of The American Legion, I would like to express support for HR 6367, the "Man in the Sea Memorial Act," to authorize the placement at the former Navy Dive School at the Washington Navy Yard of a memorial to honor the members of the armed forces who have served as divers and whose service in defense of the United States has been carried out beneath the waters of the world.

Military divers have served through a long history of actions in all US wars since WWI, including: beach and harbor clearances and recoveries; clandestine infiltration missions; maintenance and repair of vessels and aircraft recovery; recoveries of Space Shuttles *Challenger* and *Columbia*; humanitarian relief efforts after natural disasters; missions to maintain the dams, locks and waterways of the United States; maintaining a security posture throughout the homeland during ports, waterways, and coastal security inspections following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001; support for a range of missions during Operation Iraqi Freedom; and a host of lesser known acts protecting US interests at home and abroad.

Representative Bilirakis, The American Legion applauds your leadership to properly recognize, honor, and memorialize those who have performed in just about every possible undersea environment – from clear, tropical conditions to frigid, dark arctic regions, shallow waters to deep seas. However, the awareness of current and future generations of the contributions of military divers to the security of the United States is threatened by a lack of a national focus on the service of the men and women who have served beneath the sea.

A clear need exists for a national memorial to military diving located in our nation's capital where the services' divers can draw a common history and where public visibility of the memorial to military diving would receive appropriate visitation. It is for these reasons The American Legion recently passed Resolution 46 supporting the Man in the Sea Memorial and so we fully support enacting HR 6367.

Respectfully,

James E. "Jim" Koutz

JAMES E. 'JIM' KOUTZ
National Commander