

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 2
INTRODUCED BY GALVIN-HALCRO

A RESOLUTION OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA RECOGNIZING THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE OF UNITED STATES SEAGOING MARINES AND THE NAVAL CRUISE SHIP, USS HELENA, AND DESIGNATING NOVEMBER 2003 AS UNITED STATES SEAGOING MARINES MONTH.

WHEREAS, seagoing marines have served aboard ships of the United States Navy from 1775 to 1998; and

WHEREAS, for 223 years, the seagoing marines participated in every naval campaign and battle to safeguard the freedom and liberty that all Montanans expect and enjoy today; and

WHEREAS, the USS Helena CL-50 was at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, when the Japanese attacked and, because the ship was in the berth normally assigned to the Pennsylvania, became a prime target, but the ship survived the attack and later gave the Japanese occasion to regret their failure to destroy it; and

WHEREAS, in 1942, the USS Helena entered action in Guadalcanal, where the long and bloody battle for the island was then beginning, and on September 15, 1942, with guns blazing, the USS Helena rescued nearly 400 of the officers and crew of the Wasp (AV-7); and

WHEREAS, the USS Helena again saw action on October 11, 1942, in the Battle of Cape Esperance in Iron Bottom Sound, protecting vital transports into Guadalcanal during which the USS Helena was the first to engage the enemy and sank the cruiser Furutaka and the destroyer Fubuki; and

WHEREAS, the USS Helena saw action several times during the climactic Naval Battle of Guadalcanal in November 1942, which the USS Helena witnessed from its beginning while escorting a supply echelon from Espiritu Santo to Guadalcanal; and

WHEREAS, the USS Helena was assigned to several bombardments of Japanese positions on New Georgia during January 1943, and the ship's guns rocked the enemy at Munda and Vila Stanmore, leveling vital supply concentrations and gun emplacements; and

WHEREAS, USS Helena's intense and rapid-fire bombardment in support of troop landings during the invasion of New Georgia made the ship a prime target, and it was hit by three Japanese torpedoes, which sank the USS Helena; and

WHEREAS, during the USS Helena's final moments, with the bow protruding from the water, the USS Helena served as a lifeboat to many of the survivors until they were rescued before the USS Helena sank; and

WHEREAS, other armed service personnel from the USS Helena endured many dramatic and harrowing hours and days before being finally rescued, with 168 of the USS Helena's crew of 900 perishing; and

WHEREAS, the USS Helena was the first ship to receive the Navy Unit Commendation for the ship's actions in the Battle of Cape Esperance, Guadalcanal, and in Kula Gulf; and

WHEREAS, the USS Helena also earned the Asiatic-Pacific Area Campaign medal with seven stars; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting and proper that the valiant deeds of the USS Helena and the ship's crew and all seagoing marines and their vessels be recognized and celebrated by the citizens of Montana.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

That the House of Representatives of the State of Montana recognize the dedicated service of the seagoing marines and, in commemoration of the USS Helena's service during the Naval Battle of Guadalcanal in November of 1942, declare the month of November 2003 as United States Seagoing Marines month.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Secretary of State send copies of this resolution to the United States Seagoing Marine Association.

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