

Remarks by the Honorable Ray Mabus
Secretary of the Navy
Celebration of the USS Milwaukee Naming
Milwaukee, WI
Tuesday, 13 September 2011

Mayor Barrett, Milwaukeeans, thank you for joining me. I am excited to be here to celebrate the naming of USS MILWAUKEE, Littoral Combat Ship – LCS – 5. I wanted to come here, to her namesake city, and share in the commemoration with the people of Milwaukee.

We are joined by local Navy reservists and midshipmen from Marquette University's Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps program – some of whom may well serve on USS MILWAUKEE one day. Thank you for joining us to celebrate the future of the Navy and this grand city.

USS MILWAUKEE will be the 5th ship to bear the city's name. The four ships previously named MILWAUKEE have had distinguished service during their lifetimes, including a monitor that fought at the battle of Mobile Bay and a light cruiser that saw duty during the Second World War.

Naming this proud ship the MILWAUKEE is intended to honor you, the hard working people of Milwaukee and all of Wisconsin, and to honor all you do to keep America strong.

Your city is a manufacturing powerhouse and historic melting pot, a fundamental building block of America's greatness. Milwaukee's commercial success with milling, meat packing, tanning, and brewing soon gave way to steam engine construction and electrical equipment. Wisconsin has a long history in shipbuilding and contributing to the nation's naval defense.

Milwaukee and Manitowoc were home to the first shipyards in Wisconsin and launched the first large vessel from Milwaukee shipyards in 1837.

During my many speeches and presentations on the Navy's energy independence goals, I often describe the evolution of Navy ships, from sails, to coal powered steam, on to oil and nuclear powered vessels. Wisconsin shipbuilding not only witnessed these shifts, it helped make them happen, with its history of building sailing ships to its first "steamer" in 1861.

Thousands of Americans flocked to Wisconsin during World War II to construct our iron clad ships. Now, she is once again leading the way with the latest Freedom class Littoral Combat Ships. It is this spirit that will live in and through this ship bearing your proud name. MILWAUKEE and ships like her will ensure your Navy and Marine Corps remain the most formidable expeditionary fighting force the world has ever known.

The Littoral Combat Ship is a major part of the future of our Navy. She will provide the Navy with fast, agile and flexible capabilities to defeat close-in threats with modular payloads like mine warfare, anti-submarine warfare and surface warfare. These modules can be changed out quickly. These design capabilities make the LCS one of the most versatile, most valuable ships in the Navy.

Make no mistake, this is a powerful ship. This is a big ship. Don't let her speed and agility and ability to go places other ships cannot fool you. LCS can operate in brown water but she is also an important part of the blue water Navy.

She will be globally deployed, offering many options for continuous forward presence, in areas where we believe she is most needed.

The LCS not only provides the Navy an affordable and effective way to expand the fleet, it also supports our shipbuilding industrial base in a way that encourages competition, rewards dedication and innovation and supports the American workforce.

The planned total of 55 littoral combat ships may eventually make up more than 15 percent of the Navy fleet. That happened only because we in the Navy worked with shipbuilders to dramatically reduce the cost of the LCS.

As a result, the Navy now gets the ships it needs, faster. Taxpayers get a break, saving almost \$3 billion on this block of ships. And we all benefit because the LCS program provides job security for American workers and national security for all Americans.

Our nation faces some serious economic challenges and we are all going to have to make sacrifices. It means making tough decisions, but also smart ones. The LCS program is a great example of how we can reduce spending without reducing capabilities.

Shipbuilder Marinette Marine has about 1,100 employees and because of the LCS contract, the company was able to recall all of its employees on layoff this summer. As LCS ramps up, the shipyard expects to reach even greater employment levels, perhaps doubling its current workforce. That is good news for Wisconsin, good news for our Navy and good news for our Nation.

The team at Marinette Marine, just three hours north of here, has already begun work on LCS 5, which will be commissioned USS MILWAUKEE in 2014. From my point of view, there is no better place to commission her than right here in your city. I have no doubt that when this ship is built and sails away from the Marinette shipyard, it will do so with all the strength of Milwaukee embedded in every frame.

So thank you to the city of Milwaukee and Mayor Barrett for this opportunity to share with you the celebration of your city, your grand history and your bright future. We are going forward together, fulfilling our obligations and serving our great nation and this great state.

The ships we build today will be a part of our fleet for more than three decades. Sailors not yet born will serve in her. With her ability to operate in the littorals and visit ports that might otherwise be inaccessible, USS MILWAUKEE may well be the only part of America many people around the world will ever see. The name Milwaukee and the spirit of Milwaukee, representing the United States, will be seen and celebrated around the world for many years to come.

Our celebration continues tonight on the field with the hometown team of America's game -- #1 in the National League Central -- Milwaukee Brewers. I'll have the privilege of introducing the crowd there to USS MILWAUKEE, as well as throwing out a pre-game pitch. I've been warming up my arm all day... Thank you all for being here and joining in the celebration of what I am sure will be a special relationship between your city and your ship. LCS 5 is the ship that will keep Milwaukee famous. Fair winds and following seas, and God bless USS MILWAUKEE and all who sail in her.