

USS Charleston Commissioning
Charleston, South Carolina
02 March 2019

Senator Scott, Congressman Cunningham, Mayor Tecklenburg, Admiral Foggo, thank you for being here today. Mrs. Riley, thank you for all of your years of service to the people of this city and for your dedicated sponsorship of this ship. And I want to thank all of the members of the Navy Marine Corps Team and the people at Austal USA for making today a reality.

One of my first public events as Secretary of the Navy was to attend the christening of this ship at the Austal facility in Mobile, Alabama. I vividly remember depositing my coin in the stepping of the mast. I spoke then of the urgent need to restore readiness and lethality to our force.

Since that time, the Navy has made meaningful strides to restore that critical foundation, through a disciplined focus on our people, capabilities and processes. And this ship exemplifies the best of all three.

For those who often hear the siren's voice of government dysfunction and inability to produce, please avert your eyes to eye Navy's newest man o 'war.

This Independence Variant Littoral Combat Ships is proof of what the teamwork of all of our people – civilian, contractor and military – can accomplish together, from acquisition to construction to testing and certification.

She is a marvel of engineering which will extend our capabilities for any mission, from the middle of the ocean to the shallowest of waters, enhancing our ability to project power ashore and at sea.

The USS Charleston will extend the maneuverability and lethality of our fleet to confront the many challenges of a complex world, from maintaining the sea lanes to countering instability to maintaining our edge against renewed great power competition.

But today as we celebrate Charleston's journey to the fleet, we also remember the legacy she carries with her.

Today, the USS Charleston becomes the sixth ship named for this great American city, forging another link in the chain that extends from the first USS Charleston in 1798, to the ships that carried that proud name into the Spanish American War, both World Wars, and Vietnam.

And that spirit will live on, in the proud service of every man and woman who rings in the first watch today. And I want to extend a special word of thanks to the plank-owner crew of USS Charleston – and their families.

I know the extreme demands that service at sea can place on both the sailor and the family, and I stand with our nation in gratitude to you all.

Understand that as you take to the sea, every man and woman who helped design, build, test and deploy this ship sails with you, as does everyone in the Department of the Navy, the City of Charleston, and the rest of our grateful nation.

So fair winds and following seas to you and all who follow you on board the USS Charleston.

And now it is my pleasure to introduce a leader who understands the importance of our Navy and our military families, Senator Tim Scott.