

Reps. Rick Jones, Ball, Bieda, Brandenburg, Brown, Caul, Condino, Cushingberry, Dean, Garfield, Hammon, Hopgood, Robert Jones, Lahti, LeBlanc, Marleau, McDowell, Meisner, Proos, Rocca, Sak, Shaffer, Spade, Hansen and Pastor offered the following resolution:

House Resolution No. 463.

A resolution to commemorate December 24th, 2008, as S.S. Leopoldville Remembrance Day in the state of Michigan.

Whereas, The Belgian transport ship S.S. Leopoldville, an 11,500-ton passenger liner, was converted to a troopship in World War II; and

Whereas, The S.S. Leopoldville was built to carry 360 passengers, but set sail in December 1944 to patrol the English Channel with 2,235 men of the 262nd and 264th Infantry Regiments of the 66th Division to help secure freedom and democracy; and

Whereas, The Allies were sending every available replacement to deal with the German threat, an additional 237 crew members, including 93 native Belgian Congo natives and 24 British seamen took this fateful journey to man the guns that were aboard the ship; and

Whereas, This ship was described by many as, "A run down ferry boat, rather than a transport ship"; and

Whereas, This time of year storms, rough seas and frigid waters were a present danger during the month of December in 1944, just five months prior to the end of World War II; and

Whereas, German U-boats in the channel posed a serious threat, having torpedoed another troop carrier on December 23rd in the Channel just outside Cherbourg, and the call for troops needed at the front was critical; and

Whereas, To speed the process and deliver the necessary replacement troops to the front, it was indicated that customary precautions were disregarded, while lifeboats were not hung over the sides of the ship as required, there were not even enough life jackets for each person on board, and no instructions were provided for their use to help save lives in mortal danger; and

Whereas, Every man aboard was packed into every nook and cranny of the ship for the half-day transport to the front, the emergency drills were abandoned; and

Whereas, No lifeboats were available in case of emergency, many other important safety measures were neglected due to priorities in the hasty delivery of troops; and

Whereas, Tragically, a torpedo from a German U-boat struck the S.S. Leopoldville of that fateful day on Christmas Eve, December 24th in 1944, resulting in the loss of more than one thousand men's lives; and

Whereas, Those who did survive the wreckless abandon of safety measures and an equally disastrous rescue attempt, the 1,400 survivors of this tragedy were sent to hospital in Cherbourg, rather than to the front for service; and

Whereas, The survivors of this tragic attack, often will not speak of the horrors of that tragic night, yet, many admit that the United States, Belgian and Great Britain's governmental efforts to "forget" this tragic event, have only served to strengthened their resolve to not allow this important part of maritime and World War II history to be buried like the fine young men who lost their lives on that tragic day; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives, That the members of this legislative body commemorates December 24, 2008 as S.S. Leopoldville Day in the state of Michigan. This is for those that made the ultimate sacrifice, their friends, families, loved ones and the survivors aboard the S.S. Leopoldville. May God help them find comfort in their bravery for having made the ultimate sacrifice as Defenders of Freedom.