

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 12, 2012

The Honorable Ray Mabus, Jr.
Secretary
United States Navy
Office of the Secretary of the Navy
2000 Navy Pentagon
Washington, DC 20350-2000

Dear Secretary Mabus:

We write to respectfully request that you name the next Virginia class attack submarine the USS *South Dakota*.

As you know, construction began in 2011 on SSN-786 and SSN-787 of the third block of the Virginia class, and neither vessel has been named at this time. Of the 12 submarines of the class that have been commissioned or are still under construction, 11 have followed the tradition of the class and have been named after a state. We write to you today to ask that South Dakota be granted the same honor that Virginia, Texas, Hawaii, North Carolina, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Missouri, California, Mississippi, Minnesota, and, most recently, North Dakota currently enjoy.

Naming the next Virginia class submarine the USS *South Dakota* would not only honor the state of South Dakota, but its sons and daughters who have selflessly volunteered and served in the U.S. Armed Forces since its adoption into the United States. Currently, nine percent of all South Dakotans are veterans.

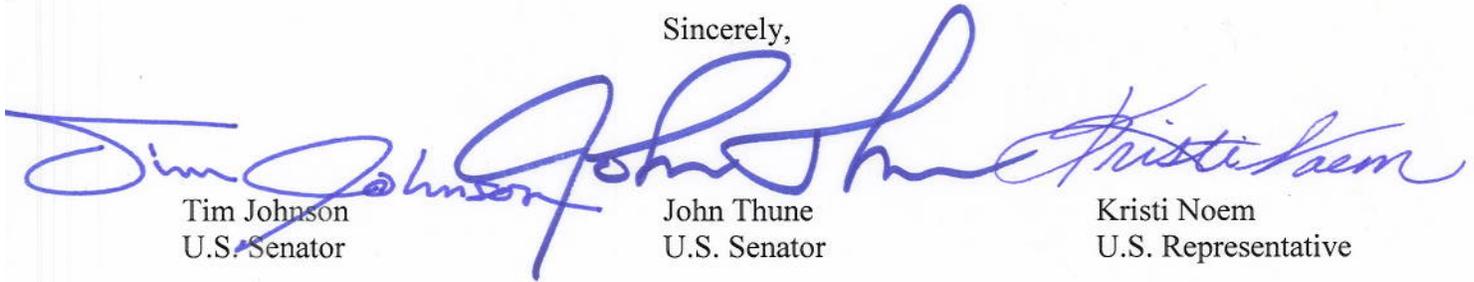
Awarding this great honor would also pay due tribute to the distinguished service history of BB-57, the battleship USS *South Dakota*, in World War II. The *South Dakota* was the most decorated battleship of World War II and was a proud representative of the 65,000 South Dakotans who answered their country's call to serve in the war. The *South Dakota* was the flagship of Admiral Chester W. Nimitz's Third Fleet and earned the Navy Unit Commendation, the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with 13 battle stars, the World War II Victory Medal, and the Navy Occupation Service Medal. The *South Dakota* earned its reputation as a fighting machine in the Battle of Santa Cruz Island, where it defended both the USS *Enterprise* and USS *Hornet* aircraft carriers by shooting down 30 enemy aircraft and operationally disabling two enemy aircraft carriers. In this battle, Captain Thomas L. Gatch earned the Navy Cross for his valiant leadership. The *South Dakota* later went on to participate in nine shore bombardments and shot down 34 more enemy aircraft, proving itself instrumental in America's victory in the Pacific, before it was decommissioned on January 31, 1947.

The dedication South Dakotans have shown in protecting America's freedoms manifests itself through the storied service of the historic battleship that shares our state's name. As South

Dakotans continue to honorably answer the call to serve, we feel it would be most appropriate to acknowledge this brave and selfless spirit in the name of the next Virginia class attack submarine.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signatures of Tim Johnson, John Thune, and Kristi Noem in blue ink. The signatures are written in a cursive style. Tim Johnson's signature is on the left, John Thune's is in the middle, and Kristi Noem's is on the right.

Tim Johnson
U.S. Senator

John Thune
U.S. Senator

Kristi Noem
U.S. Representative