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By:  Taylor S.C.R. No. 25

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, The Texas A&M Maritime Academy in Galveston plays an important role in the education of U.S. Coast Guard maritime professionals and in disaster relief, but it lacks a ship of sufficient size to support U.S. waterborne commerce and national security; and

WHEREAS, One of only six federally supported schools for aspiring mariners, TAMMA trains future merchant marine officers pursuing a college degree and a Coast Guard license; cadets require six months at sea to earn certification as a third mate or third engineer, but the academy's current training vessel, provided by the Maritime Administration, holds only 50 students; consequently, it has had to turn many applicants away; and

WHEREAS, Over the past dozen years, TAMMA has been obliged to send some of its Sea Aggies to other academies for their oceangoing experience; these cadets are placed at a disadvantage for leadership roles, and in summer 2018, none of the other academies were able to accommodate additional students; TAMMA was forced to lease a ship at the cost of $4 million, of which approximately $1 million was neither covered by student fees nor reimbursed by the federal government; and

WHEREAS, Following disasters, marine academy ships are used to provide clinics for victims, generate clean water and electricity, and bring supplies into affected areas; the small ship presently owned by TAMMA was activated to provide humanitarian aid in the wake of Hurricane Harvey, but it could only hold 35 workers from the Federal Emergency Management Agency; Texans impacted by the catastrophe had to wait two weeks for the arrival of other training ships from the East Coast, which were capable of housing 600 FEMA employees each; this delay severely affected both civilian lives and the economy of the Houston area, which is home to the nation's second-busiest port; the Gulf Coast is vulnerable to extreme weather, and speedy recovery is essential in a region that generates over $230 billion annually and encompasses more than 90 percent of the nation's oil and gas production; and

WHEREAS, The ability to send and receive goods over the water is critical to our economy and national security, but there is already a shortage of trained seafarers; by providing TAMMA with a national security multimission training vessel, the Maritime Administration can ensure that the academy is able to help address the maritime industry's workforce needs, while also improving disaster response readiness in the Gulf Coast region; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the 86th Legislature of the State of Texas hereby respectfully urge the Texas delegation to the United States Congress to express to the U.S. Maritime Administration and the jurisdictional congressional committees the critical need to provide a national security multimission training vessel to the Texas A&M Maritime Academy; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the Texas secretary of state forward official copies of this resolution to the members of the Texas delegation to Congress.