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October 1, 2026

The Honorable Hung Cao
Acting Secretary of the Navy
Department of the Navy
1000 Navy Pentagon
Washington, DC 20350

Dear Secretary Cao:

I write to urge that the next aircraft carrier authorized after the six ships of the Gerald R. Ford class be named for President Richard Milhous Nixon. Names for CVN-78 through CVN-83 have all been assigned, and I ask that the Department reserve the naming of the next hull that comes available for President Nixon.

Six presidents have served in the United States Navy: Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Ford, Carter, and George H. W. Bush. Five of them have vessels named for them: two carriers for President Kennedy, one each for President Ford and President George H. W. Bush, a destroyer for President Johnson, and a submarine for President Carter. In January 2025, the Navy named aircraft carriers after Presidents Clinton and George W. Bush, neither of whom served in the Navy. Today, President Nixon is the only former president who served in the Navy with no vessel of any kind named for him.

Richard Nixon came to the Navy as a Quaker from Whittier, California, entitled to a religious exemption and holding a deferred federal post. He sought a commission at a time when it was neither required of him nor expected of him. Commissioned in the Naval Reserve on 15 June 1942, he served with the South Pacific Combat Air Transport Command at Vella Lavella, Bougainville, and Green Island, where his men prepared manifests and flight plans and loaded transport aircraft on strips under Japanese air attack. He received two letters of commendation, his command shared a Navy Unit Commendation for heroism in the forward areas, and he remained in the Naval Reserve for nearly a quarter-century, retiring in 1966 with the rank of commander.

That young officer went on to be a president who understood sea power. He recognized the fleet's capacity to project American power across oceans without dependence on foreign bases, and two of the first three Nimitz class carriers were contracted and built out during his

presidency. The Nixon Doctrine placed the burden of manpower on America's allies while preserving America's ability to supply the air and sea power that deters aggression, which is the work a carrier strike group exists to perform. He also signed the 1971 legislation that set induction authority to expire and officially brought the draft to an end in 1973. Every sailor who would serve aboard a ship bearing his name will serve as a volunteer thanks to him.

He held the armed services in high regard, and he was willing to absorb personal cost to protect their standing. Previously classified testimony published this year in the New York Times by James Rosen confirms that personnel associated with the Joint Chiefs of Staff ran a spy operation against their own Commander in Chief, obtaining classified National Security Council documents and passing them to senior military officials. President Nixon learned of it in December 1971, and he declined to prosecute or publicize the matter, in part to spare the armed forces the injury such a disclosure would have done in the middle of the Vietnam War.

With President Nixon's outstanding Naval record and courageous leadership in mind, I respectfully urge you to reserve the name of the next carrier that Congress authorizes for our 37th president. In doing so, you will honor a young officer who served under fire, a reservist who gave nearly twenty-five years to the Navy, and the leader who made the carrier the instrument of this country's reach.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Riley M. Moore". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Riley" being the most prominent part.

Riley M. Moore
Member of Congress