

## Legislation Text

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Recognizing the work of Philadelphia's own Louise Esola and her book "American Boys: The True Story of the Lost 74 of the Vietnam War". Which brings to light the story of the 74 sailors that perished on the USS *Frank E. Evans* during the Vietnam War.

WHEREAS, On March 29, 1969, the officers and men of the USS *Frank E. Evans* departed Long Beach, California for the Western Pacific Deployment with the United States Navy to carry out the operational orders of their Commander in Chief during a time of war in Vietnam; and

WHEREAS, On June 3, 1969, the USS *Frank E. Evans*, while on an allied naval exercise during the Vietnam War, collided with the Australian aircraft carrier, HMAS *Melbourne* in the South China Sea, near the coast of Vietnam; and

WHEREAS, The collision severed the ship into two sections, with the forward section sinking in less than three minutes, taking the lives of 74 American sailors; and

WHEREAS, A Philadelphia boy, Patrick M. Corcoran, was on the ship. Patrick Corcoran, remembered as a typical "Irish Catholic Philly kid," graduated from Father Judge High School in 1968. Urged by the threat of the United States Army draft and a harrowing death toll in Vietnam, Corcoran joined the Navy; and

WHEREAS, Corcoran served for several months aboard the USS *Frank E. Evans*, which had already collected four battle stars for actions during Vietnam. Within a year of his high school graduation, Patrick Corcoran was dead, a casualty among 74 killed in the disaster at sea; and

WHEREAS, Members of the United States armed forces who died during the Vietnam War have been memorialized by engraving names on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense, despite the favorable endorsement of the Department of the Navy that the names be added to "The Wall" in Washington, continues to falsely maintains that the men who died as a result on the USS *Frank E. Evans* do not meet the criteria for inclusion on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial because the accident occurred outside the combat zone when, in fact, that ship and every other American ship in the vicinity was awarded a Vietnam Service Medal on the very day of the accident; and

WHEREAS, The Vietnam combat zone boundaries, which were ill-defined and were changed from time to time, should not be applied to exclude the names of the lost sailors from the Memorial because members of the United States armed forces who died outside the designated Vietnam War combat zone have had their names placed on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial; and

WHEREAS, Four years ago, the story of the 74 caught up with journalist Louise Esola, a proud Philadelphia native, a Northeast High School and Penn State graduate. Esola, the author of the book, "American Boys: The True Story of the Lost 74 of the Vietnam War", painstakingly researched the USS *Frank E. Evans* saga and the injustice of the 74; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Esola has been a journalist for over 15 years. Her work has been featured in numerous publications including the *UT San Diego*, *Philadelphia Inquirer* and the *Associated Press*. In 2010, while on a newspaper assignment in California she first learned of the ordeal and the story of Patrick Corcoran; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Esola, fueled by empathy, spent four years tirelessly researching and writing the untold story of the men of the USS *Frank E. Evans*. Ms. Esola made several trips to the National Archives and the Naval History and Heritage Command in Washington, D.C. and traveled the country interviewing survivors, veterans, and families of the men who died; she unearthed groundbreaking information to make a strong case for adding the names to the Vietnam Wall; and

WHEREAS, The story of the USS *Frank E. Evans* is no longer an untold story, lost in history. “American Boys” was released in September of 2014 and has collected rave reviews from readers and historians alike. And as one review of the book stated, “This beautiful, heart- breaking book should be required reading at the Pentagon and the White House”; and

WHEREAS, The Vietnam Wall in Washington still doesn't recognize Philadelphia’s own Patrick Corcoran and his 73 shipmates, five of them Pennsylvanians. Yet, the Philadelphia Vietnam Veterans Memorial does in fact list Corcoran as a casualty, as many state and city Vietnam memorials do for this group of fallen, young American sailors; and

WHEREAS, The USS *Frank E. Evans* Association, a group of veterans and family members who have been petitioning the government for years, are getting closer to resolution than ever with the House of Representative’s endorsement of adding the names to the Wall, a decision that rests with Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel; and

WHEREAS, This Council unanimously supports the placement of the 74 names on the National Vietnam Veterans Memorial as evidenced by the passing of Resolution Number 140660; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it honors and recognizes a proper place in history and national memorials for the sacrifice made by the 74 sailors that perished on the USS *Frank E. Evans* during the Vietnam War and celebrates the work of Philadelphia’s own Louise Esola in bringing this story to light in her book “American Boys: The True Story of the Lost 74 of the Vietnam War”.