

R.M.S. Titanic Maritime Memorial Act of 1986

An Act

To encourage international efforts to designate the shipwreck of the R.M.S. Titanic as an international maritime memorial and to provide for reasonable research, exploration, and, if appropriate, salvage activities with respect to the shipwreck.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

Section 1 Short title

This Act may be cited as the "R.M.S. Titanic Maritime Memorial Act of 1986".

Section 2 Findings and purposes

(a) Findings. The Congress finds that:

(1) The R.M.S. Titanic, the ocean liner which sank on her maiden voyage after striking an iceberg on 14 April 1912, should be designated as an international maritime memorial to the men, women, and children who perished aboard her;

(2) The recent discovery of the R.M.S. Titanic, lying more than 12,000 feet beneath the ocean surface, demonstrates the practical applications of ocean science and engineering;

(3) The R.M.S. Titanic, well preserved in the cold, oxygen-poor waters of the deep North Atlantic Ocean, is of major national and international cultural and historical significance, and merits appropriate international protection; and

(4) The R.M.S. Titanic represents a special opportunity for deep ocean scientific research and exploration.

(b) Purpose. The Congress declares that the purposes of this Act are:

(1) To encourage international efforts to designate the R.M.S. Titanic as an international maritime memorial to those who lost their lives aboard her in 1912;

(2) To direct the United States to enter into negotiations with other interested nations to establish an international agreement which will provide for the designation of the R.M.S. Titanic as an international maritime memorial, and protect the scientific, cultural, and historical significance of the R.M.S. Titanic;

(3) To encourage, in those negotiations or in other fora, the development and implementation of international guidelines for conducting research on, exploration of, and if appropriate, salvage of the R.M.S. Titanic; and

(4) To express the sense of the United States Congress that, pending such international agreement or guidelines, no person should physically alter, disturb, or salvage the R.M.S. Titanic in any research or exploratory activities which are conducted.

Section 3 Definitions

For the purpose of this Act, the term:

- (a) "Administrator" means the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA);
- (b) "person" means any individual (whether or not a citizen or national of the United States), any corporation, partnership, association, or other entity (whether or not organized or existing under the laws of any State), and any Federal, State, local, or foreign Government or any entity of any such Government;
- (c) "R.M.S. Titanic" means the shipwrecked vessel R.M.S. Titanic, her cargo or other contents, including those items which are scattered on the ocean floor, in her vicinity; and
- (d) "Secretary" means the Secretary of State.

Section 4 Commendation

The Congress of the United States highly commends the members of the joint international expedition which discovered the R.M.S. Titanic.

Section 5 International guidelines

- (a) The Administrator is directed to enter into consultations with the United Kingdom, France, Canada, and other interested nations to develop international guidelines for research on, exploration of, and if appropriate, salvage of the R.M.S. Titanic which:
 - (1) Are consistent with its national and international scientific, cultural, and historical significance and the purposes of this Act; and
 - (2) Promote the safety of individuals involved in such operations.
- (b) In carrying out subsection (a), the Administrator shall consult with the Secretary and shall promote full participation by other interested Federal agencies, academic and research institutions, and members of the public.

Section 6 International agreement

- (a) The Secretary is directed to enter into negotiations with the United Kingdom, France, Canada, and other interested nations to develop an international agreement which provides for:
 - (1) The designation of the R.M.S. Titanic as an international maritime memorial; and
 - (2) Research on, exploration of, and if appropriate, salvage of the R.M.S. Titanic consistent with the international guidelines developed pursuant to section 5 and the purposes of this Act.

(b) In carrying out the requirements of subsection (a), the Secretary shall consult with the Administrator, who shall provide research and technical assistance to the Secretary.

(c) The Secretary and the Administrator shall report semi-annually to the Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries and the Committee on Foreign Affairs in the House of Representatives and to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation in the Senate on the progress of the negotiations and consultations.

(d) Upon adoption of an international agreement as described in subsection (a), the Secretary shall provide notification of the agreement and recommendations for legislation to implement the agreement to the Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries and the Committee on Foreign Affairs in the House of Representatives and to the Committee on Foreign Relations and the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation in the Senate.

Section 7

Sense of Congress regarding conduct of future activities

It is the sense of Congress that research and limited exploration activities concerning the R.M.S. Titanic should continue for the purpose of enhancing public knowledge of its scientific, cultural, and historical significance: Provided, that, pending adoption of the international agreement described in section 6 (a) or implementation of the international guidelines described in section 5, no person should conduct any such research or exploration activity which would physically alter, disturb, or salvage the R.M.S. Titanic.

Section 8

Disclaimer of extraterritorial sovereignty

By enactment of this Act, the United States does not assert sovereignty, or sovereign or exclusive rights or jurisdiction over, or the ownership of, any marine areas or the R.M.S. Titanic.

Approved 21 October 1986.