

Public Law 99-513  
99th Congress

An Act

Oct. 21, 1986  
[S. 2048]

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,*

R.M.S. Titanic  
Maritime  
Memorial Act of  
1986.  
16 USC 450rr  
note.

**SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

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

16 USC 450rr.

**SEC. 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 April 14, 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 twelve thousand 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.

16 USC 450rr-1.

**SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

For the purposes 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.

#### SEC. 4. COMMENDATION.

16 USC 450rr-2.

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

#### SEC. 5. INTERNATIONAL GUIDELINES.

16 USC 450rr-3.

(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—

United  
Kingdom.  
France.  
Canada.

(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.

#### SEC. 6. INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENT.

16 USC 450rr-4.

(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—

United  
Kingdom.  
France.  
Canada.

(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 semiannually 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 on the progress of the negotiations and consultations.

Reports.

(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.

16 USC 450rr-5. SEC. 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.

16 USC 450rr-6. SEC. 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 October 21, 1986.

The Administrator is directed to enter into consultations with the United States, France, Canada, and other interested nations to develop the most appropriate guidelines for research or exploration of the R.M.S. Titanic, and to report to the Senate and the House of Representatives on the progress of such consultations. The Administrator shall also report to the Senate and the House of Representatives on the progress of such consultations with the Secretary and other interested parties and on the progress of such consultations with the Secretary and other interested parties.

SEC. 5. EXTRATERRITORIAL AGREEMENT. The Secretary is directed to enter into negotiations with the United States, France, Canada, and other interested nations to develop an international agreement which provides for the R.M.S. Titanic as an international maritime monument. The Secretary is directed to enter into negotiations with the United States, France, Canada, and other interested nations to develop an international maritime monument. The Secretary is directed to enter into negotiations with the United States, France, Canada, and other interested nations to develop an international maritime monument.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY—S. 2048 (H.R. 3272):

- HOUSE REPORTS: No. 99-393 accompanying H.R. 3272 (Comm. on Merchant Marine and Fisheries).
- CONGRESSIONAL RECORD:
  - Vol. 131 (1985): Dec. 2, H.R. 3272 considered and passed House.
  - Vol. 132 (1986): Sept. 24, S. 2048 considered and passed Senate.
  - Oct. 6, considered and passed House.