Austal USA Celebrates Keel Laying for the Future USS Pierre (LCS 38) – The Final Independence LCS



Release from Austal USA

*****

JUNE 19, 2023

MOBILE, Ala. – Austal USA hosted a keel laying ceremony late last week for the future USS Pierre (LCS 38) Independence-variant Littoral Combat Ship at the company's Gulf Coast shipyard. Ship sponsor Larissa Thune Hargens, with the assistance of Hon Tran – a 13-year Austal USA veteran A-class welder, authenticated the keel by welding her initials into a keel plate that will be welded to the hull of the ship.

The future USS Pierre is the final Independence-variant Littoral Combat Ship being built by Austal USA in Mobile, Ala. LCS 38 is the second U.S. Navy ship named for the South Dakota capital city. The original USS Pierre (PC-1141) was a

submarine chaser built during World War II.

“Keel laying represents a major milestone in the construction of a ship,” said Dave Growden, vice president of new construction. “While every keel laying we celebrate is special, this one has added significance as it starts to close the line of a highly successful program.”

The ceremony was widely attended by community and Navy leaders and Austal USA shipbuilders. Notably, in a strong statement of support for the future USS Pierre, from the South Dakota delegation, Senator John Thune and Senator Mike Rounds attended the event along with the Mayor of Pierre, Mayor Steve Harding.

“This is a special honor for the city of Pierre and all of South Dakota,” said Thune. “It’s also a good day for the Navy and the men and women of our joint forces. I’m particularly humbled, of course, to have had the privilege of introducing my daughter Larissa as the ship’s sponsor – a proud dad moment.”

Hargens, a native of South Dakota, graduated from Bethel University. The call to serve runs deep in her family, Hargens is involved with a non-profit incentive program that helps limited-income pregnant women in Sioux Falls, her father is U.S. Senator John Thune and her grandfather was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight in Fighting Squadron 18 (VF-18) on the USS Intrepid (CV-11) during World War II.

“I am so honored and grateful for this incredible opportunity to sponsor the future USS Pierre,” stated Hargens. “It is a privilege to be a part of this time-honored tradition and to have my initials welded to a plate that will become a part of the ship’s keel. I look forward to participating in the important milestones throughout the life of the USS Pierre, and to building a lifelong relationship with the ship and the

sailors that will make up her crew. May God bless the USS Pierre.”

Independence-variant Littoral Combat Ships are fast, optimally-manned, mission-tailored surface combatants that operate in near-shore and open-ocean environments, winning against 21st-century coastal threats. Austal USA has delivered 17 LCS to the Navy since 2009, most of which have been deployed with the Pacific Fleet. The shallow-draft Independence-variant LCS have been opening up places for the Navy to operate where they had not been for years. The ship’s steerable water jets allow for effective maneuverability in and out of austere ports. With the capacity to deploy Naval Strike Missile and employ mine counter measure the ship can conduct key missions throughout the Pacific making them a highly functioning platform.

Pierre is planned for delivery in fiscal year 2025 and will be homeported in San Diego, Calif., along with the other Independence LCSs that have been delivered to the fleet.