

# AUSTAL USA Christens 19th LCS – FUTURE USS PIERRE



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MOBILE, Ala. – Austal USA celebrated the christening of the company's 19<sup>th</sup> Independence-variant Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) today – the future USS Pierre (LCS 38). Ship sponsor Larissa Thune Hargens executed the ceremonial bottle break over the bow of Pierre witnessed by an audience of over four hundred excited guests.

Hargens, a native of South Dakota, graduated from Bethel University, in Saint Paul, Minn., with a bachelor's degree in political science and history. Since graduating, Hargens has held several positions with the University of Sioux Falls in South Dakota and currently owns her own LLC, Red Writer, where she does freelance marketing and social media.

The call to serve runs deep in Hargens' family. 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 and her father is U.S. Senator John Thune.

Hargens has continued that tradition by serving with a non-profit incentive program that helps limited-income pregnant women.

Key speakers at the ceremony included Vice Admiral Morley, USN, Commander Naval Sea Systems Command; Rear Admiral Anderson, USN, Program Executive Office Ships; U.S. Senator John Thune representing South Dakota; and Austal USA President Michelle Kruger.

“One of my proudest moments since joining Austal USA, was looking out into the audience today and seeing the many talented Austal USA employees and other Navy and industry guests who are responsible for the success of the LCS program,” stated Austal USA President Michelle Kruger. “Austal USA has grown from a small commercial shipyard to a large, advanced defense ship manufacturer primarily thanks to the Indy-variant LCS program. Christening this ship, the last Austal USA-built LCS, makes me a bit nostalgic but I know, for this company and the great team we’ve assembled, the future is bright and limitless.”

LCS 38 is the second ship named in honor of the capital city of South Dakota, a region with a rich American culture that includes a great history of service to the Navy and Marine Corps. The first USS Pierre, a World War II PC class submarine chaser, was commissioned in 1943 and decommissioned in 1958. Pierre (LCS 38) is the last Independence-variant LCS to be christened. Following delivery, she will join her sister ships homeported in San Diego and deploying to the INDO-PACOM region.

“It is truly an honor for PEO USC to have led the construction of this remarkable class of ships,” said Rear Adm. Kevin Smith, Program Executive Officer, Unmanned and Small Combatants (PEO USC). “Built by an industry team lead by Austal USA, the Littoral Combat Ship stands as a testament to our unwavering commitment to innovation and excellence in

naval shipbuilding. As we christen the USS Pierre, we also celebrate the extraordinary crews that will sail this ship, employing the capabilities and versatility of the Littoral Combat Ship class, which will continue to play a pivotal role in safeguarding our nation's interests now and for years to come."

The LCS is a fast, agile, mission-focused platform designed to operate in near-shore environments, winning against 21st-century coastal threats. In November 2023 the Navy reported it had six Independence-variant LCS deployed in the Pacific throughout 2023, including the record-breaking 26-month overseas deployment of USS Charleston (LCS 18). The Austal USA-built LCS variant is also providing support to the Navy's unmanned programs with USS Oakland (LCS 24) operating as a mothership for the Unmanned Surface Division 1 vessels Ranger, Mariner, Seahawk and Sea Hunter; the large flight decks support unmanned drones, like the MQ-8C Fire Scout. Integration of the mine countermeasures (MCM) mission package placed aboard USS Canberra (LCS 30) signifies additional capabilities planned for Independence-class ships.