Navy to Commission Littoral Combat Ship USS Billings on Aug. 3



The future USS Billings conducts acceptance trials on Lake Michigan last December. U.S. Navy/Marinette Marine

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Navy will commission its newest Freedom-variant littoral combat ship, the future USS Billings (LCS 15), during an Aug. 3 ceremony in Key West, Florida, the Navy's information office said in a release.

U.S. Sen. Jon Tester, ranking member of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, will deliver the commissioning ceremony's principal address. Tester's wife, Sharla, is the ship's sponsor. The ceremony will be highlighted by a time-honored Navy tradition when she gives the first order to "man our ship and bring her to life!"

"The future USS Billings and her crew will play an important role in the defense of our nation and maritime freedom," said Navy Secretary Richard V. Spencer, who is also performing the duties of deputy secretary of defense. "She stands as proof of what teamwork – from civilian to contractor to military – can accomplish. This fast, agile platform will deliver her motto, 'Big Sky Over Troubled Waters' worldwide thanks to their efforts."

USS Billings is launched after her christening in 2017. The ship is named in honor of Billings, the largest city in Montana, as well as the people and

military veterans of the
state. The future USS Billings will be the first ship of its name in naval
service.

Montana has a heritage of naval
service, with 30 ships named over the years in honor of state places and
people, including the Los Angeles-class fast attack submarine USS Helena (SSN
725) and the Virginia-class fast attack submarine USS Montana (SSN 794), which
is under construction. The state of Montana also has one of the highest per
capita populations of veterans, according to the U.S. Veterans Administration.

The future USS Billings is a platform
designed for operation in near-shore environments yet capable of open-ocean
operation. It is designed to defeat asymmetric “anti-access” threats
such as mines, quiet diesel submarines and fast surface craft. The ship will be
homeported in Mayport, Florida.

The LCS class consists of two variants, the Freedom variant and the Independence variant, designed and built by two industry teams. The Freedom-variant team is led by Lockheed Martin of Marinette, Wisconsin (the odd-numbered hulls) while the Independence-variant team is led by Austal USA of Mobile, Alabama (for LCS 6 and the subsequent even-numbered hulls).

The ceremony, using hashtag #USSBillings, can be viewed here on the Navy live blog starting at 10 a.m. on Aug. 3.