

President, First Lady Celebrate Commissioning of USS Delaware



President Joe Biden and First Lady Jill Biden, the ship sponsor, celebrated the commissioning of the Virginia-class fast attack submarine USS Delaware (SSN 791) Saturday, April 2. *U.S. NAVY*

WILMINGTON, Delaware – President Joe Biden and First Lady Jill Biden, the ship sponsor, celebrated the commissioning of the Virginia-class fast attack submarine USS Delaware (SSN 791) Saturday, April 2, in a ceremony in Wilmington, Delaware.

Biden previously represented the state of Delaware for 36 years in the U.S. Senate.

Due to COVID restrictions in place at the time, there was no traditional commissioning ceremony held when USS Delaware was commissioned administratively on April 4, 2020. On that day, the submarine was underway and became the first U.S. Navy ship commissioned while submerged.

Saturday's ceremony followed the script of a traditional commissioning and was held in commemoration of the milestone.

"This latest Navy ship to carry the Delaware name is part of a long tradition of serving our nation proudly and strengthening our nation's security," Biden said. "Not just us, but our allies and partners around the world as well."

As the ship sponsor, Jill Biden performed the traditional honor of calling for the crew to man the ship and "bring her to life," a ceremonial procession following the commemorative setting of the first watch.

“This vessel will always uphold the First State’s motto of ‘Liberty and Independence,’” she said. “It’s difficult to put into words what it means to be a part of the USS Delaware family. It’s an incredible honor that I take seriously. I’ve seen the heart of this crew and it makes me proud and humbled to be your shipmate for life.”

USS Delaware is the 18th Virginia-class submarine built, as well as the eighth and final Block III Virginia-class sub. The Block III submarines are notable for replacing 12 vertical launch tubes for Tomahawk Land Attack Missiles with two larger, 87-inch diameter launch tubes, capable of carrying larger payloads, among other advancements.

“The men who serve – and will serve – aboard the USS Delaware will bear our state’s name for decades to come as they defend our nation,” said U.S. Sen. Tom Carper of Delaware, the event’s keynote speaker. “Through their sacrifice and service, may we grow even closer to that more perfect union.”

USS Delaware is homeported at Submarine Base New London in Groton, Connecticut, where it operates under Submarine Squadron 12 and its Commodore, Capt. Matthew Boland.

The submarine is the seventh U.S. Navy ship to be named for the First State, but first in more than a century. The first ship to be named Delaware was a 24-gun frigate launched in July of 1776, the month the Continental Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence.