

SB 678 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Veterans and Emergency Preparedness

Action Date: 03/27/19

Action: Do pass and refer to Ways and Means by prior reference.

Vote: 4-0-0-0

Yeas: 4 - Boquist, Monnes Anderson, Olsen, President Courtney

Fiscal: Fiscal impact issued

Revenue: No revenue impact

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Meeting Dates: 3/20, 3/27

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Appropriates \$1.9 million General Fund dollars to the Department of Administrative Services for distribution to return the vessel *Salvage Chief* to operation for emergency response and recovery purposes. Declares emergency, effective July 1, 2019.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- History vessel, uniqueness, variety of capacities, including: carrying fuel; clearing submerged hazardous debris in shipping lanes, waterways, shallow waters; refloating other vessels; accommodating a helicopter
- Critical location for state, West coast and Columbia River region; value as immediate regional emergency response asset and to speed up *economic* recovery post disaster
- Comparison to much older Portland fire boat *David Campbell*, built in 1927, still in active service
- Current service as volunteer training vessel for Job Corps' Seamanship Program
- Investments already made; cost to procure equivalent capacities or services as compared to investment in *Salvage Chief*

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

The *Salvage Chief* was originally commissioned the USS *LSM-380*, one of 558 LSMs (landing crafts, medium) built for the U.S. Navy between 1944 and 1945, sized to carry five medium or three heavy tanks, or up to nine "Duck boats" (amphibious vehicles or DUKWs). She was manned by six officers and 54 crew and assigned to the Asia-Pacific theater, where LSMs proved critical to the Allies' success. Six months after assignment, on August 15, 1945, Japan surrendered and the USS *LSM-380* carried Marines to China to manage the repatriation of thousands to Japan. She then sailed to Guam, Pearl Harbor, and back across the Pacific to join the mothball fleet at Suisan Bay near San Francisco, destined for scrap. In 1948, she was decommissioned and purchased by Fred Devine, a visionary entrepreneur and salvage expert based out of Portland, who transformed and repurposed the ship for shallow-water salvage and recovery work, by scavenging and installing 60-ton pull anchor winches both fore and aft, and building an aft helicopter pad, among other unique modifications. The ship then operated out of Astoria starting in 1949 and became renowned for its rescue and recovery work over the next 50 years, particularly with large ships in dire situations, including refloating the grounded 10,000-ton Liberty ship *Yorkmar*, the Greek freighter *Cptyannis*, the 810-foot Liberian oil tanker *Sansinena*, the crippled *Exxon Valdez*, as well as barges, dredges, cruise ships, a Japanese troop ship, a U.S. Coast Guard cutter, and more. *Salvage Chief* is now owned by Salvage Chief, LLC, whose partners are attempting to transform it once more into a local asset for disaster training and response purposes. ("Salute to M/V *Salvage Chief* (ex-LSM 380)" by Jim Mockford, *Sea History* 162, Spring 2018, at <https://seahistory.org/wp-content/uploads/SH162-SalvChief.pdf>, accessed March 2019.)

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Senate Bill 678 appropriates \$1.9 million General Fund dollars to the Department of Administrative Services for distribution to the Salvage Chief Foundation - specifically \$1.2 million for hull repairs; \$400,000 for engine and fire pump upgrades; and \$300,000 to upgrade emergency communications and provide for U.S. Coast Guard inspection and contingency - to return the vessel *Salvage Chief* to operation for disaster training, response, and recovery purposes.