

# Historic American passenger ship at critical juncture

## Future of “ship of state” in question

### National flagship S.S. UNITED STATES to be listed for sale

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Washington, DC – February 10, 2009: The S.S. United States Conservancy ([www.ssunitedstatesconservancy.org](http://www.ssunitedstatesconservancy.org)), a national non-profit organization working to preserve America's flagship, has learned that the S.S. UNITED STATES will be sold by the ship's current owner, Star Cruises. Star Cruises has provided no assurances that the historic vessel will not be sold for scrap.

Norwegian Cruise Line, a subsidiary of Hong Kong-based Star Cruises, purchased the S.S. UNITED STATES in April, 2003 with the intent of returning her to service as part of NCL America, the Line's U.S.-flagged fleet. NCL has maintained the ship on the Philadelphia waterfront since 2003. NCL's U.S.-flagged brand has weathered recent financial setbacks, and its fleet has been reduced to a single vessel, the PRIDE OF AMERICA.

The S.S. UNITED STATES shattered all transatlantic speed records on her maiden voyage in 1952 and to this day is, by a wide margin, the fastest passenger vessel ever built. The ship was listed on the National Register of Historic Places before the normal 50 year old requirement because of her “compelling national significance”. During her service career, she hosted heads of state, captains of industry, and "A list" celebrities. Her passenger lists included Presidents Truman, Eisenhower and Kennedy, the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, Marilyn Monroe, Grace Kelly, Greta Garbo, Katherine Hepburn, John Wayne, Cary Grant, Errol Flynn, Marlon Brando, Leonard Bernstein and even Leonardo da Vinci's masterpiece Mona Lisa, traveling first class in a specially designed container on her way home after an exhibition in the United States.

Designed to be easily converted to a troop ship, she was a top-secret Cold War weapon able to transit the Panama Canal and transport 15,000 troops over 10,000 miles without refueling. She embodied the triumphant spirit of post-war "can do" America and was the subject of endless press coverage in her day. The S.S. UNITED STATES was our "ship of state" and national symbol in the 1950's and 60's. While bringing many thousands of immigrants to a new life in America, the ship traveled 2,770,884 nautical miles and never once was delayed because of mechanical failure.

Given recent actions by the ship's current owners and the current value of steel and aluminum, some fear the ship will be sold to dealers who will tow her overseas and sell her for scrap.

“We must not let this national treasure fall into the wrong hands if she is sold,” said Conservancy President Susan Gibbs of Washington, DC, granddaughter of the vessel's designer, William Francis Gibbs. “While we understand the challenges posed by the economic downturn, this ship must be

saved. By converting the S.S. UNITED STATES into a hotel, museum and meeting space in New York, Philadelphia, or another major port city, we could give new life to a great symbol of American strength and resilience. The ship's conversion would create many jobs and generate needed tax revenues. While the project is ambitious, we hope that a broad coalition of supporters will rally to save this national icon."

"We are mounting a major public awareness campaign to 'Save our Ship,'" said Charles Anderson, a maritime attorney in New York City, whose father was the ship's longest-serving Master. "We think it's critical that all Americans, including members of Congress, civic and business leaders, and media representatives understand what is at stake here. Like the U.S.S. Constitution and the Spirit of Saint Louis, the S.S. UNITED STATES is part of a treasured heritage we cannot afford to lose. This ship represents an era of unprecedented optimism and confidence in our future as a nation, as well as a crowning achievement in American engineering and design. Our nation's flagship must be saved for future generations of Americans."

**About the SS United States Conservancy:** The SS United States Conservancy is a national organization dedicated to preserving the historic ocean liner, the S.S. UNITED STATES, America's national flagship. The SS United States Conservancy has compiled a long track record of accomplishment, including co-sponsoring an hour-long documentary film, "SS United States: Lady in Waiting," that has aired on public television nationwide. The Conservancy has produced exhibits and delivered educational seminars at a number of prominent maritime museums as well as developed the world's largest audio-visual archive about the S.S. UNITED STATES. Members of the Conservancy's Board of Directors, many of whom have direct ties to the S.S. UNITED STATES, have published articles, delivered lectures and presentations to large audiences throughout the nation, and remain deeply committed to ongoing research and advocacy on behalf of the S.S. UNITED STATES' preservation. Since 2004, the Conservancy has been operating under the auspices of the SS United States Preservation Society, founded in 1992. The SS United States Preservation Society played a lead role in placing the S.S. UNITED STATES on the National Register of Historic Places based on its "compelling national significance" in 1999 and supported Congressional legislation to preserve the S.S. UNITED STATES back in 1992. The Conservancy recently relocated its national headquarters to Washington DC to expand its national outreach and advocacy efforts. For more information on the organization, visit [www.ssunitedstatesconservancy.org](http://www.ssunitedstatesconservancy.org) or call (888)-488-7787.

**Summary:** The imminent listing of the S.S. UNITED STATES for sale by Hong Kong-based Star Cruises will alarm many thousands of supporters of the great American passenger ship, for fear that she will be sold for scrap and destroyed. The fact that this vessel is our national flagship will likely motivate a massive public awareness campaign on behalf of a national treasure that should be preserved for its historic and cultural value. The ship could become the centerpiece of a large public works project that creates jobs and generates tax revenues.