

Keel Laying of *California* (SSN 781)

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Video transcript

Matt Mulherin, sector vice president and general manager, Northrop Grumman

Shipbuilding-Newport News: "It's my great pleasure to welcome you all to the keel authentication ceremony of Virginia-class submarine *California*! ... As impressive as this submarine will be when complete, we will marvel not only at the ship itself, but at the people who built it, the people who will sail it and the people it will defend."

[Shipbuilder Ron Harper singing national anthem]

Shipbuilder Patti Richardson: "As we build these ships, help us, God, to be mindful of our brothers and sisters that will sail these ships. May our work provide the quality and safety needed for them to accomplish their mission."

John Casey, president, General Dynamics Electric Boat: "All of us on the Virginia team are working diligently to ensure that this program maintains its standing as the finest example of shipbuilding in the nation ... as it achieves new benchmarks for cost-effective design and construction and advanced mission capabilities for the Navy."

U.S. Rep. Robert "Bobby" Scott: "But the real work of getting these ships built rests on the shoulders of the shipbuilders. And just as the keel is the backbone of a vessel, the ships built in this shipyard by the dedicated employees form the keel of supporting the Navy's world supremacy. The USS *California* will be a fine example of our dedication to ensuring that we maintain our sovereign ability to sail the seas unfettered to protect American interests all over the world."

Adm. Kirkland Donald, director of Naval Nuclear Propulsion: "I thank you for joining me here today as we mark the ceremonial beginning of life for the next great ship named for *California*. Sponsors are, among other duties, the chief 'good luck' officers for the fleet, so we choose carefully for this significant assignment. Whether it's through the symbolic acts of authenticating a keel or christening with a bottle of sparkling wine or just through the close involvement with the crew, the sponsors set the tone for those sailors for the good fortune for life of the ship."

Ship's Sponsor Donna Willard: "For me, the keel laying today symbolizes the birth of the newest USS *California*. But it's not just about the steel on the outside of the *California* that makes this so exciting for me, but rather it's the men on the inside. They are the sons, the brothers, the husbands and the fathers who will give life to this boat. They are the ones who go in harm's way in defense of our freedom. ... I pledge my support to you and your crew and to all the crews that follow you."

[Music during weld.]

Mrs. Willard: "I hereby declare the keel of the United States Navy submarine *California* truly and fairly laid."