

## Palm Beach Post: House passes bill to raise status of SEALs museum

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WASHINGTON &mdash; The Navy UDT-SEAL Museum in Fort Pierce might soon be known as the Official National Museum of Navy SEALs and their Predecessors thanks to legislation passed Monday by the U.S. House of Representatives.

The bill, proposed by U.S. Rep. Tim Mahoney, D-Palm Beach Gardens, passed by a voice vote and is now awaiting consideration in the Senate.

The official status, Mahoney said, "would help raise awareness of this local treasure so people from throughout the country and the world can come to our community to learn about these brave American heroes."

As an official national museum it will also be eligible to receive federal grants. Michael Howard, executive director of the museum has said he would use the grants to fund some of the major projects now under way, including doubling the museum's size and upgrading the displays.

"We've been kind of struggling to get on the map and get appreciation from the county, state, and nation. We're just elated to become a national museum," Howard said.

Howard has also said the grants would be used to help advertise its annual Muster event, a three-day celebration on Veterans' Day weekend that is open to the public. This year the event will take place Nov. 9-11.

"We hope we will become a destination for visitors and tourists and we think this will open the door for big plans in our future," said Howard.

The beachside museum opened in 1985 and is the only one dedicated to Navy SEALs and their predecessors. Featuring thousands of artifacts, including a Vietnam-era helicopter recovered from the ocean, the museum attracts about 30,000 visitors a year.