

119TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 1087

To posthumously award a Congressional Gold Medal, collectively, to the African Americans who served with Union forces during the Civil War, in recognition of their bravery and outstanding service.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 6, 2025

Ms. NORTON (for herself, Mr. AMO, Mr. BEYER, Mr. CARTER of Louisiana, Mr. GRJALVA, Mrs. HAYES, and Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Financial Services, and in addition to the Committee on House Administration, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

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## A BILL

To posthumously award a Congressional Gold Medal, collectively, to the African Americans who served with Union forces during the Civil War, in recognition of their bravery and outstanding service.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “United States Colored  
5 Troops Congressional Gold Medal Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

2 Congress finds the following:

3 (1) Since the colonial era, African Americans  
4 have served the United States in times of war.

5 (2) During the Civil War, approximately  
6 200,000 African-American men served in the Union  
7 Army and 19,000 African-American men served in  
8 the Union Navy.

9 (3) During the Civil War, African-American  
10 women were not allowed to formally enlist as soldiers  
11 or sailors, though they served as nurses, cooks,  
12 spies, and scouts for the Union Army and the Union  
13 Navy.

14 (4) While African-American men served in the  
15 Navy since its establishment, there was resistance to  
16 enlisting them to take up arms for the Union Army  
17 at the start of the Civil War.

18 (5) As the Civil War dragged on, President  
19 Lincoln broke from the previous policy of his admin-  
20 istration and determined that liberating enslaved  
21 persons “was a military necessity absolutely essen-  
22 tial for the salvation of the Union”.

23 (6) The Act entitled “An Act to suppress insur-  
24 rection, to punish treason and rebellion, to seize and  
25 confiscate the property of rebels, and for other pur-  
26 poses”, approved July 17, 1862 (commonly known

1 as the “Second Confiscation Act”) (12 Stat. 589;  
2 chapter 195), and the Act of July 17, 1862 (com-  
3 monly known as the “Military Act of 1862”) (12  
4 Stat. 597; chapter 201), were the first official au-  
5 thorizations to employ African Americans in the  
6 Union Army.

7 (7) It was not until January 1, 1863, the effec-  
8 tive date of the Emancipation Proclamation issued  
9 by President Lincoln, that the Union Army was or-  
10 dered to receive African-American men.

11 (8) On May 22, 1863, the United States War  
12 Department issued General Order Number 143,  
13 which established the Bureau of Colored Troops for  
14 the recruitment and organization of regiments of the  
15 Union Army composed of African-American men,  
16 called the United States Colored Troops (referred to  
17 in this section as “USCT”).

18 (9) Leaders such as Frederick Douglass encour-  
19 aged African Americans to enlist to advance the  
20 cause of citizenship. “Once let the black man get  
21 upon his person the brass letters, ‘U.S.’, let him get  
22 an eagle on his button, and a musket on his shoul-  
23 der and bullets in his pocket, there is no power on  
24 [E]arth that can deny that he has earned the right  
25 to citizenship.”, wrote Douglass.

1           (10) African-American sailors constituted a sig-  
2           nificant segment of the Union Navy, making up 20  
3           percent of the total enlisted force of the Navy.

4           (11) Although there were rank restrictions on  
5           African Americans in the Navy before the Civil War,  
6           this policy changed after the establishment of the  
7           USCT, when the Union Navy started to compete  
8           with the Union Army for enlistment of African  
9           Americans.

10          (12) Yet, in practice, most African Americans  
11          could not advance beyond lowest ranks of “boy” and  
12          “landsman.”

13          (13) African-American soldiers and sailors  
14          served with distinction, honor, and bravery amid ra-  
15          cial discrimination and adverse circumstances, in-  
16          cluding the risk of enslavement and torture if cap-  
17          tured.

18          (14) Eighteen members of the USCT and 8 Af-  
19          rican-American sailors were awarded the Medal of  
20          Honor, the highest honor in the United States for  
21          bravery in combat.

22          (15) For generations after the Civil War, the  
23          contributions of African Americans in the Civil War  
24          were excluded from historical memory.

1           (16) Public Law No. 102–412 (106 Stat. 2104)  
2           authorized the establishment of a memorial on Fed-  
3           eral land in the District of Columbia to honor Afri-  
4           can Americans who served with Union forces during  
5           the Civil War.

6           (17) This memorial, featuring a bronze statue  
7           of USCT soldiers, an African-American sailor and  
8           family, is surrounded by the Wall of Honor, which  
9           lists the names of the members of the USCT.

10          (18) The African American Civil War Museum  
11          is located in the District of Columbia.

12          (19) Patriots and heroes who rose in service to  
13          a Nation that would not fully recognize them, the  
14          African Americans who served the Union during the  
15          Civil War deserve our recognition for their contribu-  
16          tions to the grant of emancipation and citizenship  
17          for nearly 4,000,000 enslaved people and the preser-  
18          vation of the Union.

19   **SEC. 3. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.**

20          (a) PRESENTATION AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of  
21          the House of Representatives and the President pro tem-  
22          pore of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements  
23          for the posthumous presentation, on behalf of Congress,  
24          of a gold medal of appropriate design to the African Amer-  
25          icans who served with Union forces during the Civil War,

1 collectively, in recognition of their bravery and out-  
2 standing service during the Civil War.

3 (b) DESIGN AND STRIKING.—For the purposes of the  
4 award referred to in subsection (a), the Secretary of the  
5 Treasury (hereafter in this Act referred to as the “Sec-  
6 retary”) shall strike a gold medal with suitable emblems,  
7 devices, and inscriptions, to be determined by the Sec-  
8 retary.

9 (c) SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.—

10 (1) IN GENERAL.—Following the award of the  
11 gold medal under subsection (a), the gold medal  
12 shall be given to the Smithsonian Institution, where  
13 the medal shall be available for display as appro-  
14 priate and available for research.

15 (2) SENSE OF THE CONGRESS.—It is the sense  
16 of Congress that the Smithsonian Institution should  
17 make the gold medal received under paragraph (1)  
18 available for display elsewhere, particularly at appro-  
19 priate locations associated with the United States  
20 Colored Troops.

21 **SEC. 4. DUPLICATE MEDALS.**

22 The Secretary may strike and sell duplicates in  
23 bronze of the gold medal struck pursuant to section 3 at  
24 a price sufficient to cover the cost thereof, including labor,  
25 materials, dies, use of machinery, and overhead expenses.

1 **SEC. 5. STATUS OF MEDALS.**

2 (a) NATIONAL MEDALS.—The medals struck pursu-  
3 ant to this Act are national medals for purposes of chapter  
4 51 of title 31, United States Code.

5 (b) NUMISMATIC ITEMS.—For purposes of section  
6 5134 of title 31, United States Code, all medals struck  
7 under this Act shall be considered to be numismatic items.

8 **SEC. 6. AUTHORITY TO USE FUND AMOUNTS; PROCEEDS OF**  
9 **SALE.**

10 (a) AUTHORITY TO USE FUND AMOUNTS.—There is  
11 authorized to be charged against the United States Mint  
12 Public Enterprise Fund such amounts as may be nec-  
13 essary to pay for the cost of the medals struck under this  
14 Act.

15 (b) PROCEEDS OF SALE.—Amounts received from the  
16 sale of duplicate bronze medals under section 4 shall be  
17 deposited in the United States Mint Public Enterprise  
18 Fund.

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