

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 2784

To award posthumously the Congressional Gold Medal to Constance Baker Motley, in recognition of her enduring contributions and service to the United States.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

SEPTEMBER 11, 2025

Mr. BLUMENTHAL (for himself, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. SCHUMER, Mr. MURPHY, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mr. KING, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. PADILLA, Mr. FETTERMAN, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. BOOKER, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mr. MERKLEY, Ms. ALSOBROOKS, Mr. SCHATZ, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Ms. CORTEZ MASTO, Mr. REED, Mr. COONS, Ms. BLUNT ROCHESTER, Mr. LUJÁN, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. WELCH, and Mr. HEINRICH) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs

A BILL

To award posthumously the Congressional Gold Medal to Constance Baker Motley, in recognition of her enduring contributions and service to the United States.

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 “Congressional Tribute
5 to Constance Baker Motley Act of 2025”.

1 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

2 Congress finds the following:

3 (1) Constance Baker Motley was born in 1921,
4 in New Haven, Connecticut, the daughter of immi-
5 grants from the Caribbean island of Nevis.

6 (2) In 1943, Constance Baker Motley grad-
7 uated from New York University with a Bachelor of
8 Arts degree in economics.

9 (3) Upon receiving a law degree from Columbia
10 University in 1946, Constance Baker Motley became
11 a staff attorney at the National Association for the
12 Advancement of Colored People Legal Defense and
13 Educational Fund, Inc. (referred to in this Act as
14 the “LDF”), and fought tirelessly for 2 decades
15 alongside Thurgood Marshall and other leading civil
16 rights lawyers to dismantle segregation throughout
17 the United States.

18 (4) Constance Baker Motley was the only fe-
19 male attorney on the LDF legal team that won the
20 landmark desegregation case, *Brown v. Board of*
21 *Education*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954).

22 (5) Constance Baker Motley argued 10 major
23 civil rights cases before the Supreme Court of the
24 United States, winning all but 1, including the case
25 brought on behalf of James Meredith challenging the
26 refusal of the University of Mississippi to admit him.

1 (6) Constance Baker Motley’s only loss before
2 the Supreme Court of the United States in *Swain v.*
3 *Alabama*, 380 U.S. 202 (1965), a case in which the
4 Supreme Court refused to proscribe race-based pe-
5 remptory challenges in cases involving African-Amer-
6 ican defendants, and which was later reversed in
7 *Batson v. Kentucky*, 476 U.S. 79 (1986), on
8 grounds that were largely asserted by Constance
9 Baker Motley in the *Swain* case.

10 (7) In 1964, Constance Baker Motley became
11 the first African-American woman elected to the
12 New York State Senate.

13 (8) In 1965, Constance Baker Motley became
14 the first African-American woman, and the first
15 woman, to serve as president of the Borough of
16 Manhattan.

17 (9) Constance Baker Motley, in her capacity as
18 an elected public official in New York, continued to
19 fight for civil rights, dedicating herself to the revital-
20 ization of the inner city and improvement of urban
21 public schools and housing.

22 (10) In 1966, Constance Baker Motley was ap-
23 pointed by President Lyndon B. Johnson as a judge
24 on the United States District Court for the Southern
25 District of New York.

1 (11) The appointment of Constance Baker Mot-
2 ley made her the first African-American woman, and
3 only the fifth woman, appointed and confirmed for
4 a Federal judgeship.

5 (12) In 1982, Constance Baker Motley was ele-
6 vated to Chief Judge of the United States District
7 Court for the Southern District of New York, the
8 largest Federal trial court in the United States.

9 (13) Constance Baker Motley assumed senior
10 status in 1986, and continued serving on the United
11 States District Court for the Southern District of
12 New York with distinction for nearly 2 decades.

13 (14) Constance Baker Motley passed away on
14 September 28, 2005, and is survived by her son,
15 Joel W. Motley III, 3 grandchildren, and nieces and
16 nephews in Connecticut and in other States.

17 (15) September 14, 2021, was the 100th anni-
18 versary of the birth of Constance Baker Motley.

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 in commemoration

1 of Constance Baker Motley, in recognition of her enduring
2 contributions and service to the United States.

3 (b) DESIGN AND STRIKING.—For purposes of the
4 presentation referred to in subsection (a), the Secretary
5 of the Treasury (referred to in this Act 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. The design shall bear an image of, and an inscrip-
9 tion of the name of, “Constance Baker Motley”.

10 (c) PRESENTATION.—With respect to the presen-
11 tation referred to in subsection (a), the gold medal shall
12 be presented to Constance Baker Motley’s son, Joel Mot-
13 ley III, and her niece, Constance Royster.

14 (d) DISPOSITION OF MEDAL.—Following the presen-
15 tation referred to in subsection (a), the gold medal shall
16 be given to Joel Motley III.

17 **SEC. 4. DUPLICATE MEDALS.**

18 The Secretary may strike and sell duplicates in
19 bronze of the gold medal struck under section 3, at a price
20 sufficient to cover the costs of the medals, including labor,
21 materials, dies, use of machinery, and overhead expenses.

22 **SEC. 5. STATUS OF MEDALS.**

23 (a) NATIONAL MEDAL.—Medals struck under this
24 Act are national medals for purposes of chapter 51 of title
25 31, United States Code.

1 (b) NUMISMATIC ITEMS.—For purposes of section
2 5134 of title 31, United States Code, all medals struck
3 under this Act shall be considered to be numismatic items.

4 **SEC. 6. AUTHORITY TO USE FUND AMOUNTS; PROCEEDS OF**
5 **SALE.**

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

11 (b) PROCEEDS OF SALE.—Amounts received from the
12 sale of duplicate bronze medals authorized under section
13 4 shall be deposited into the United States Mint Public
14 Enterprise Fund.

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