

112TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 1815

To posthumously award a Congressional Gold Medal to Lena Horne in recognition of her achievements and contributions to American culture and the civil rights movement.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 10, 2011

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida (for himself, Mr. BACHUS, Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts, Mr. ROHRABACHER, Mr. CONYERS, Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi, Mr. RANGEL, Ms. NORTON, Mr. GRIJALVA, Ms. FUDGE, Mr. HINCHEY, Mr. MEEKS, Ms. CLARKE of New York, Mr. SCOTT of Virginia, Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas, Mrs. LOWEY, Mr. WEST, Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD, Ms. BROWN of Florida, Mr. RUPPERSBERGER, Mr. SERRANO, Mr. BACA, and Mrs. CHRISTENSEN) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Financial Services

A BILL

To posthumously award a Congressional Gold Medal to Lena Horne in recognition of her achievements and contributions to American culture and the civil rights movement.

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 “Lena Horne Recogni-
5 tion Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

2 The Congress finds as follows:

3 (1) Lena Mary Calhoun Horne was born on
4 June 30, 1917, in Brooklyn, New York.

5 (2) At the age of 16, Lena Horne was hired as
6 a dancer in the chorus of Harlem's famous Cotton
7 Club, where she was introduced to such legendary
8 jazz performers as Duke Ellington, Cab Calloway,
9 Count Basie, Ethel Waters, and Billie Holiday.

10 (3) In 1940, Lena Horne became one of the
11 first African-American women to perform with an
12 all-White band when she toured with Charlie
13 Barnet's jazz band as its featured singer.

14 (4) Lena Horne was discovered by a Metro-
15 Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM) talent scout and became the
16 first Black artist to sign a long-term contract with
17 a major studio.

18 (5) Despite her extraordinary beauty and tal-
19 ent, Lena Horne was often limited to minor acting
20 roles because of her race.

21 (6) Scenes in which she did sing were cut out
22 when they were sent to local distributors in the
23 South and studio executives cast Ava Gardner as
24 Julie in the film version of Show Boat instead of
25 Lena Horne because they did not want it to star a
26 Black actress.

1 (7) However, Lena Horne dazzled audiences
2 and critics in a number of films, including Cabin in
3 the Sky and Stormy Weather.

4 (8) During World War II, Lena Horne toured
5 extensively with the United Service Organizations
6 (USO) on the West Coast and in the South in sup-
7 port of the troops and expressed outrage about the
8 way Black soldiers were treated.

9 (9) She refused to sing for segregated audiences
10 or to groups in which German prisoners of war were
11 seated in front of African-American servicemen.

12 (10) During the period of McCarthyism in the
13 1950s, Lena Horne was blacklisted as a communist
14 for 7 years because of her civil rights activism and
15 friendship with Paul Robeson and W.E.B. Du Bois.

16 (11) Although Lena Horne continued to face
17 discrimination, her musical and acting career flour-
18 ished.

19 (12) In 1957, Lena Horne recorded Lena
20 Horne at the Waldorf-Astoria, which reached the
21 Top 10 and became the best-selling album by a fe-
22 male singer in RCA Victor's history.

23 (13) Lena Horne rose to international stardom
24 and toured the world, sharing the stage with such
25 names as Count Basie, Tony Bennett, Billy

1 Eckstein, Vic Damone, and Harry Belafonte and
2 also starred in musical and television specials with
3 such giants as Judy Garland, Bing Crosby, and
4 Frank Sinatra.

5 (14) Lena Horne used her fame to become a
6 powerful voice for civil rights and equality.

7 (15) In 1963, she participated in the historic
8 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, at
9 which Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his im-
10 mortal “I Have a Dream” speech.

11 (16) Lena Horne also performed at rallies
12 throughout the country for the National Council for
13 Negro Women and worked with the National Asso-
14 ciation for the Advancement of Colored People
15 (NAACP), of which she was a member since the age
16 of 2, the National Council of Negro Women, the
17 Delta Sigma Theta sorority, and the Urban League.

18 (17) Through the end of the 20th century,
19 Lena Horne continued to entertain large audiences
20 of all ages and backgrounds and appeared on nu-
21 merous television shows, including Sesame Street,
22 Sanford and Son, The Muppet Show, The Cosby
23 Show, and A Different World.

24 (18) In 1978, she was in the film adaptation of
25 The Wiz.

1 (19) In 1981, Ms. Horne captivated audiences
2 with her one-woman Broadway show, *Lena Horne:
3 The Lady and Her Music*, which enjoyed a 14-
4 month run before going on tour and earned her a
5 special Tony and two Grammy awards.

6 (20) In 2002, 73 years after the Academy
7 Awards were first awarded, Halle Berry became the
8 first Black woman to win an Oscar for Best Actress
9 and recognized in her acceptance speech how Lena
10 Horne paved the way for her and other Black ac-
11 tresses.

12 (21) Lena Horne passed away in New York
13 City on May 9, 2010, at the age of 92.

14 (22) Lena Horne was an entertainer, activist,
15 and mother who used her beauty, talent, and intel-
16 ligence to fight racial discrimination and injustice
17 and rise to international stardom.

18 (23) A symbol of elegance and grace, she enter-
19 tained people of all walks of life for over 60 years
20 and broke barriers for future generations.

21 **SEC. 3. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.**

22 (a) PRESENTATION AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of
23 the House of Representatives and the President pro tem-
24 pore of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements
25 for the posthumous presentation, on behalf of the Con-

1 gress, of a gold medal of appropriate design in commemo-
2 ration of Lena Horne in recognition of her achievements
3 and contributions to American culture and the civil rights
4 movement.

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

11 **SEC. 4. DUPLICATE MEDALS.**

12 The Secretary may strike and sell duplicates in
13 bronze of the gold medal struck pursuant to section 2
14 under such regulations as the Secretary may prescribe, at
15 a price sufficient to cover the cost thereof, including labor,
16 materials, dies, use of machinery, and overhead expenses,
17 and the cost of the gold medal.

18 **SEC. 5. STATUS OF MEDALS.**

19 (a) NATIONAL MEDALS.—The medals struck pursu-
20 ant to this Act are national medals for purposes of chapter
21 51 of title 31, United States Code.

22 (b) NUMISMATIC ITEMS.—For purposes of section
23 5134 of title 31, United States Code, all medals struck
24 under this Act shall be considered to be numismatic items.

1 **SEC. 6. AUTHORITY TO USE FUND AMOUNTS; PROCEEDS OF**
2 **SALE.**

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

8 (b) **PROCEEDS OF SALE.**—Amounts received from the
9 sale of duplicate bronze medals authorized under section
10 3 shall be deposited into the United States Mint Public
11 Enterprise Fund.

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