

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2261

To award posthumously a Congressional Gold Medal to Colonel Young Oak Kim in recognition of his extraordinary heroism, leadership, and humanitarianism.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 26, 2021

Ms. STRICKLAND (for herself, Mr. KIM of New Jersey, Mrs. KIM of California, and Mrs. STEEL) 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

A BILL

To award posthumously a Congressional Gold Medal to Colonel Young Oak Kim in recognition of his extraordinary heroism, leadership, and humanitarianism.

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 “Colonel Young Oak
5 Kim Congressional Gold Medal Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 The Congress finds the following:

1 (1) Young Oak Kim was born in Los Angeles
2 in 1919 to Korean American immigrants, where his
3 family faced numerous challenges. After high school,
4 Kim enrolled in Los Angeles City College, but
5 dropped out after a year to find work to help sup-
6 port his family.

7 (2) Because of racial discrimination, Kim strug-
8 gled to keep employed. With the outbreak of World
9 War II (WWII), Kim tried to enlist in the United
10 States Army, but that opportunity was closed off to
11 him, too, as an Asian American. However, after
12 Congress extended conscription to Asian Americans,
13 Kim was drafted into the Army, entering the service
14 on January 31, 1941.

15 (3) From the earliest days of Kim's service in
16 the United States Army, he distinguished himself as
17 a leader, being selected for the Infantry Officer Can-
18 didate School at Fort Benning, Georgia. Upon his
19 commission as a second lieutenant in 1943, Kim was
20 assigned to the all-Japanese American 100th Infan-
21 try Battalion/442nd Regimental Combat Team.

22 (4) Young Oak Kim was assigned as an officer
23 of the 100th Infantry Battalion that was formed on
24 June 5, 1942, comprised of predominantly second-

1 generation Americans of Japanese ancestry from the
2 Hawaiian Islands.

3 (5) When Kim reported to duty, his com-
4 manding officer gave Kim the option to transfer due
5 to the historical conflicts between the Japanese and
6 Koreans, but Kim stated, “Sir, they’re Americans
7 and I am an American. And we’re going to fight for
8 America.”.

9 (6) The 100th Infantry Battalion was deployed
10 to the Mediterranean and entered combat in Italy on
11 September 26, 1943. The 100th Battalion fought at
12 Cassino, Italy in January 1944, and later accom-
13 panied the 34th Infantry Division to Anzio, Italy.

14 (7) Kim’s most notable feat occurred at the
15 Battle of Anzio, during broad daylight he volun-
16 teered to capture German soldiers for intelligence in-
17 formation. He and another soldier crawled more
18 than 600 yards located directly under German obser-
19 vation posts with no cover. They captured two pris-
20 oners and obtained information that significantly
21 contributed to the fall of Rome. For his actions, Kim
22 received the Distinguished Service Cross from the
23 United States and the Military Valor Cross, the
24 highest military decoration in Italy.

1 (8) The 100th Infantry Battalion was formally
2 made an integral part of the 442nd Regimental
3 Combat Team on June 15, 1944, and fought for the
4 last 11 months of the war with distinction in Italy,
5 southern France, and Germany. The 442nd Regi-
6 mental Team became the most decorated unit in
7 United States military history for its size and length
8 of service. The 100th Battalion and the 442nd Regi-
9 mental Combat Team, received 7 Presidential Unit
10 Citations, 21 Medals of Honor, 29 Distinguished
11 Service Crosses, 560 Silver Stars, 4,000 Bronze
12 Stars, 22 Legion of Merit Medals, 15 Soldier's Med-
13 als, and over 4,000 Purple Hearts, among numerous
14 additional distinctions.

15 (9) When the Korean war broke out in 1950,
16 Kim rejoined the United States Army and partici-
17 pated in the United Nations Forces' last drive into
18 Korea. As commander of the First Battalion, 31st
19 Infantry Regiment, he became the first officer of
20 color in United States history to command an Army
21 battalion on the battlefield.

22 (10) In Seoul, he led his battalion in sponsoring
23 an orphanage of more than 500 children. The bat-
24 talion was the only United Nations military unit to
25 sponsor an orphanage during the war.

1 (11) In 1972, Kim retired from the Army at
2 the rank of Colonel. By the end of his career, Kim
3 had earned the Distinguished Service Cross, two Sil-
4 ver Stars, two Bronze Stars, three Purple Hearts,
5 two Legions of Merit, and several military com-
6 mendations from foreign governments-Italy's Bronze
7 Medal of Military Valor and Military Valor Cross,
8 France's La Legion D'Honneur, and the Republic of
9 Korea's Taeguk Order of Military Merit.

10 (12) Kim returned to his native Los Angeles
11 and became a civic leader. In 1975, he established
12 the Koreatown Youth and Community Center in Los
13 Angeles to support recently immigrated Korean
14 youth who were struggling with poverty and lan-
15 guage barriers, which today serves a broad multi-
16 ethnic population of 11,000 people in the greater
17 Los Angeles area.

18 (13) In 1978, Kim helped establish the Center
19 for the Pacific Asian Family (CPAF), an organiza-
20 tion providing culturally and linguistically appro-
21 priate domestic violence and sexual assault services
22 to the pan-Asian immigrant community. Under his
23 leadership as CPAF's chairman, the organization be-
24 came the largest women's shelter in Southern Cali-
25 fornia in the 1990s.

1 (14) In 1986, Kim founded the Korean Health,
2 Education, Information and Research Center
3 (KHEIR), a nonprofit service agency providing cul-
4 turally and linguistically-sensitive health care and
5 human services to the uninsured and underserved
6 residents of Los Angeles. Today KHEIR operates
7 two clinics that can accommodate more than 75,000
8 patient visits annually and is the only federally
9 qualified health center in the United States that
10 serves a majority Korean patient base, with all serv-
11 ices available in English, Korean, and Spanish.

12 (15) In 1985, Kim co-founded the Japanese
13 American National Museum (JANM), which pro-
14 motes understanding and appreciation of America's
15 ethnic and cultural diversity by sharing the Japa-
16 nese American experience.

17 (16) In 1989, Kim founded and served as the
18 Chairman of the 100th/442nd/MIS WWII Memorial
19 Foundation, which is now known as the Go for
20 Broke National Education Center. Kim led a cam-
21 paign with veterans of the 100th Infantry Battalion,
22 442nd RCT and Military Intelligence Service to
23 build the Go for Broke Monument, in downtown Los
24 Angeles, which serves as a tribute to the Japanese
25 American soldiers of World War II.

1 (17) Kim’s contributions in the 1980s and
2 1990s also included founding the Korean American
3 Museum and the Korean American Coalition, both
4 entities dedicated to understanding the Korean
5 American experience and addressing its issues and
6 needs.

7 **SEC. 3. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.**

8 (a) PRESENTATION AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of
9 the House of Representatives and the President pro tem-
10 pore of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements
11 for the posthumous presentation, on behalf of the Con-
12 gress, of a gold medal of appropriate design, in commemo-
13 ration of Colonel Young Oak Kim, in recognition of his
14 achievements and contributions to heroism, leadership,
15 and humanitarianism.

16 (b) DESIGN AND STRIKING.—For the purposes of the
17 presentation referred to in subsection (a), the Secretary
18 of the Treasury (referred to in this Act as the “Sec-
19 retary”) shall strike a gold medal with suitable emblems,
20 devices, and inscriptions to be determined by the Sec-
21 retary.

22 (c) SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.—

23 (1) IN GENERAL.—Following the award of the
24 gold medal under subsection (a), the gold medal
25 shall be given to the Smithsonian Institution, where

1 it shall be available for display as appropriate and
2 made available for research.

3 (2) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of
4 Congress that the Smithsonian Institution shall
5 make the gold medal received under paragraph (1)
6 available for—

7 (A) display, particularly at the National
8 Portrait Gallery; or

9 (B) loan, as appropriate, so that the medal
10 may be displayed elsewhere.

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

12 The Secretary may strike and sell duplicates in
13 bronze of the gold medal struck pursuant to section 3
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 **SEC. 5. STATUS OF MEDALS.**

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

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

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