

117TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 4147

To award a Congressional Gold Medal to Billie Jean King, in recognition of her contribution to the Nation and her courageous and groundbreaking leadership advancing equal rights for women and the LGBTQ community in athletics, education, and our society.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 24, 2021

Mr. LOWENTHAL (for himself, Ms. NORTON, Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. MCNERNEY, Mr. CARSON, Mr. CUELLAR, Mr. YARMUTH, Mr. VARGAS, Ms. JAYAPAL, Ms. CHU, Mr. SOTO, Ms. DAVIDS of Kansas, and Mr. CORREA) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

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## A BILL

To award a Congressional Gold Medal to Billie Jean King, in recognition of her contribution to the Nation and her courageous and groundbreaking leadership advancing equal rights for women and the LGBTQ community in athletics, education, and our society.

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. FINDINGS.**

4       Congress finds the following:

5               (1) Billie Jean King, born Billie Jean Moffit,  
6       on November 22, 1943, in Long Beach, California,

1 was the first child of Betty (née Jerman) and Bill  
2 Moffitt.

3 (2) Billie Jean demonstrated athletic prowess  
4 from a young age. She was introduced to tennis at  
5 the age of 11, and soon after, Billie Jean purchased  
6 her first tennis racket using money she earned work-  
7 ing various jobs in her neighborhood.

8 (3) After becoming involved with tennis, Billie  
9 Jean observed inequities within the sport and real-  
10 ized she could use tennis as a platform—if she be-  
11 came number one. From then on, Billie Jean was  
12 determined to become a top athlete in her sport.

13 (4) Billie Jean broke numerous barriers to be-  
14 come a number one professional tennis player. She  
15 dominated women’s tennis with 39 Grand Slam sin-  
16 gles, doubles, and mixed doubles titles, including a  
17 record 20 championships at Wimbledon. She also  
18 was a member of three World Team Tennis cham-  
19 pionship teams.

20 (5) After growing in prominence, Billie Jean  
21 used her platform as a celebrity to fight for equal  
22 rights and opportunities for equality for all genders  
23 in sports—and society—in the United States.

24 (6) Billie Jean played an instrumental role in  
25 the passage of Title IX, a law that mandates equal

1 funding for women's and men's sports programs in  
2 schools and colleges. This legislation has unlocked a  
3 world of opportunities for girls and women in edu-  
4 cation and sports.

5 (7) During Billie Jean's career, the pay dif-  
6 ference between prize money for men and women in  
7 tennis continued to expand. By the early 1970s, the  
8 pay gap in prize money reached ratios of as much  
9 as 12 to one. Fewer and fewer tournaments were  
10 hosting women's events. Realizing that she would  
11 not have support from mainstream tennis organiza-  
12 tions, Billie Jean harnessed the energy of the wom-  
13 en's rights movement to create a women's tennis  
14 tour that would elevate women's tennis and establish  
15 pay equity within the sport. Along with eight other  
16 women tennis players, Billie Jean risked it all and  
17 formed an independent women's professional tennis  
18 circuit, the Virginia Slims Tournament, and a play-  
19 er's union that would help achieve greater equality  
20 in prize money and recognition for women in sports.

21 (8) In 1971, Billie Jean became the first  
22 woman in sports history to make \$100,000 in earn-  
23 ings in a single year.

24 (9) In 1972, Billie Jean was also the first ten-  
25 nis player to be named Sports Illustrated's

1 Sportsperson of the Year and the first woman to re-  
2 ceive the honor.

3 (10) Billie Jean founded the Women’s Tennis  
4 Association, a successor to the Virginia Slims Series,  
5 and today’s principal governing body for women’s  
6 professional tennis.

7 (11) Billie Jean helped found womenSports  
8 magazine and founded the Women’s Sports Founda-  
9 tion. Both have been at the forefront of advancing  
10 women’s voice in sports.

11 (12) In 1973, Billie Jean played a tennis match  
12 against Bobby Riggs, a top-ranked player through  
13 the 1940s who sought to undermine the credibility  
14 and prominence of women in sports. Billie Jean de-  
15 feated Riggs in what became a firm declaration of  
16 women’s role in sports and society.

17 (13) Billie Jean was one of the first women  
18 athletes to identify as lesbian, and has courageously  
19 challenged negative stereotypes and championed the  
20 visibility and inclusion of the LGBTQ community.

21 (14) Billie Jean King was named one of the  
22 “100 Most Important Americans of the 20th Cen-  
23 tury” by LIFE magazine.

24 (15) Billie Jean King is the recipient of the  
25 1999 Arthur Ashe Award for Courage.

1           (16) Billie Jean’s excellence has earned her  
2 place in the International Women’s Sports Hall of  
3 Fame, the International Tennis Hall of Fame, and  
4 the National Women’s Hall of Fame.

5           (17) In 2006, the United States Tennis Asso-  
6 ciation recognized Billie Jean’s immeasurable impact  
7 on the sport of tennis by renaming the site of the  
8 US Open in her honor as the USTA Billie Jean  
9 King National Tennis Center, which is located in  
10 Flushing Meadows Corona Park in Queens, New  
11 York. This was the first time a major sporting com-  
12 plex was named after a woman.

13           (18) Billie Jean King has received honorary de-  
14 grees from colleges and universities across the Na-  
15 tion, including the University of Pennsylvania, Dart-  
16 mouth College, the University of Massachusetts Am-  
17 herst, and Northwestern University, amongst others.

18           (19) Billie Jean’s commitment and tireless ad-  
19 vocacy to expand women’s tennis, created ground-  
20 breaking opportunities, financial and otherwise, for  
21 women not only in tennis but across women’s sports.  
22 She has paved the way for others, including today’s  
23 famed tennis champion duo, sisters Venus and  
24 Serena Williams.

1           (20) Billie Jean believes in changing hearts and  
2 minds, and through her talent, tenacity, and advoca-  
3 cacy she changed how women are perceived world-  
4 wide.

5           (21) In 2009, Billie Jean was awarded the  
6 Presidential Medal of Freedom, the Nation’s highest  
7 civilian honor, by President Barack Obama for her  
8 impactful work advocating for the rights of women  
9 and the LGBTQ community. She was the first fe-  
10 male athlete to receive this honor.

11           (22) In 2014, Billie Jean King founded an in-  
12 clusive leadership non-profit organization to promote  
13 and transform equality in the workplace worldwide.  
14 The Billie Jean King Leadership Initiative aims to  
15 empower companies and individuals to create inclu-  
16 sive work environments that celebrate and promote  
17 diversity to increase representation, maximize our ef-  
18 ficiency, and tap into the unlimited potential of tal-  
19 ent in our world.

20           (23) Billie Jean King’s extraordinary courage,  
21 leadership, and activism helped propel the women’s  
22 movement forward, and open doors for countless  
23 Americans regardless of gender, race, class or sexual  
24 orientation. On and off the court, Billie Jean has  
25 served as an inspiration to millions of people the

1 world over. Few women and men have had a greater  
2 impact on their sport and on our society than Billie  
3 Jean King.

4 **SEC. 2. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.**

5 (a) PRESENTATION AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of  
6 the House of Representatives and the President pro tem-  
7 pore of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements  
8 for the presentation, on behalf of Congress, of a gold  
9 medal of appropriate design, to Billie Jean King, in rec-  
10 ognition of her contribution to the Nation and her coura-  
11 geous and groundbreaking leadership advancing equal  
12 rights for women and the LGBTQ community in athletics,  
13 education, and our society.

14 (b) DESIGN AND STRIKING.—For the purpose of the  
15 presentation referred to in subsection (a), the Secretary  
16 of the Treasury (hereinafter in this Act referred to as the  
17 “Secretary”) shall strike a gold medal with suitable em-  
18 blems, devices, and inscriptions to be determined by the  
19 Secretary.

20 **SEC. 3. DUPLICATE MEDALS.**

21 Under such regulations as the Secretary may pre-  
22 scribe, the Secretary may strike and sell duplicates in  
23 bronze of the gold medal struck pursuant to section 2 at  
24 a price sufficient to cover the cost of the bronze medals

1 (including labor, materials, dies, use of machinery, and  
2 overhead expenses).

3 **SEC. 4. NATIONAL MEDALS.**

4       The medals struck under this Act are national medals  
5 for purposes of chapter 51 of title 31, United States Code.

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