

113TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 685

To award a Congressional Gold Medal to the American Fighter Aces, collectively, in recognition of their heroic military service and defense of our country's freedom throughout the history of aviation warfare.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 14, 2013

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas (for himself and Mr. HECK of Washington) 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 award a Congressional Gold Medal to the American Fighter Aces, collectively, in recognition of their heroic military service and defense of our country's freedom throughout the history of aviation warfare.

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 “American Fighter Aces  
5 Congressional Gold Medal Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

2 The Congress finds the following:

3 (1) An American Fighter Ace is a fighter pilot  
4 who has served honorably in a United States mili-  
5 tary service and who has destroyed 5 or more con-  
6 firmed enemy aircraft in aerial combat during a war  
7 or conflict in which American armed forces have  
8 participated.

9 (2) Beginning with World War I, and the first  
10 use of airplanes in warfare, military services have  
11 maintained official records of individual aerial vic-  
12 tory credits during every major conflict. Of more  
13 than 60,000 United States military fighter pilots  
14 that have taken to the air, less than 1,500 have be-  
15 come Fighter Aces.

16 (3) Americans became Fighter Aces in the  
17 Spanish Civil War, Sino-Japanese War, Russian  
18 Civil War, Arab-Israeli War, and others. Addition-  
19 ally, American military groups' recruited United  
20 States military pilots to form the American Volun-  
21 teer Group, Eagle Squadron, and others that pro-  
22 duced American-born Fighter Aces fighting against  
23 axis powers prior to Pearl Harbor.

24 (4) The concept of a Fighter Ace is that they  
25 fought for freedom and democracy across the globe,  
26 flying in the face of the enemy to defend freedom

1 throughout the history of aerial combat. American-  
2 born citizens became Fighter Aces flying under the  
3 flag of United States allied countries and became  
4 some of the highest scoring Fighter Aces of their re-  
5 spective wars.

6 (5) American Fighter Aces hail from every  
7 State in the Union, representing numerous ethnic,  
8 religious, and cultural backgrounds.

9 (6) Fighter Aces possess unique skills that have  
10 made them successful in aerial combat. These in-  
11 clude courage, judgment, keen marksmanship, con-  
12 centration, drive, persistence, and split-second think-  
13 ing that makes an Ace a war fighter with unique  
14 and valuable flight driven skills.

15 (7) The Aces' training, bravery, skills, sacrifice,  
16 attention to duty, and innovative spirit illustrate the  
17 most celebrated traits of the United States military,  
18 including service to country and the protection of  
19 freedom and democracy.

20 (8) American Fighter Aces have led distin-  
21 guished careers in the military, education, private  
22 enterprise, and politics. Many have held the rank of  
23 General or Admiral and played leadership roles in  
24 multiple war efforts from WWI to Vietnam through

1 many decades. In some cases they became the high-  
2 est ranking officers for following wars.

3 (9) The extraordinary heroism of the American  
4 Fighter Ace boosted American morale at home and  
5 encouraged many men and women to enlist to fight  
6 for America and democracy across the globe.

7 (10) Fighter Aces were among America's most-  
8 prized military fighters during wars. When they ro-  
9 tated back to the United States after combat tours,  
10 they trained cadets in fighter pilot tactics that they  
11 had learned over enemy skies. The teaching of com-  
12 bat dogfighting to young aviators strengthened our  
13 fighter pilots to become more successful in the skies.  
14 The net effect of this was to shorten wars and save  
15 the lives of young Americans.

16 (11) Following military service, many Fighter  
17 Aces became test pilots due to their superior flying  
18 skills and quick thinking abilities.

19 (12) Richard Bong was America's top Ace of all  
20 wars scoring a confirmed 40 enemy victories in  
21 WWII. He was from Poplar, Wisconsin, and flew the  
22 P-38 Lightning in all his combat sorties flying for  
23 the 49th Fighter Group. He was killed in 1945 dur-  
24 ing a P-80 test flight in which the engine flamed  
25 out on takeoff.

1           (13) The American Fighter Aces are one of the  
2 most decorated military groups in American history.  
3 Twenty-two Fighter Aces have achieved the rank of  
4 Admiral in the Navy. Seventy-nine Fighter Aces  
5 have achieved the rank of General in the Army, Ma-  
6 rines, and Air Force. Nineteen Medals of Honor  
7 have been awarded to individual Fighter Aces.

8           (14) The American Fighter Aces Association  
9 has existed for over 50 years as the primary organi-  
10 zation with which the Aces have preserved their his-  
11 tory and told their stories to the American public.  
12 The Association established and maintains the Out-  
13 standing Cadet in Airmanship Award presented an-  
14 nually at the United States Air Force Academy; es-  
15 tablished and maintains an awards program for out-  
16 standing fighter pilot “lead-in” trainee graduates  
17 from the Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps; and  
18 sponsors a scholarship program for descendants of  
19 American Fighter Aces.

20 **SEC. 3. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.**

21           (a) PRESENTATION AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of  
22 the House of Representatives and the President pro tem-  
23 pore of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements  
24 for the presentation, on behalf of the Congress, of a single  
25 gold medal of appropriate design in honor of the American

1 Fighter Aces, collectively, in recognition of their heroic  
2 military service and defense of our country's freedom,  
3 which has spanned the history of aviation warfare.

4 (b) DESIGN AND STRIKING.—For the purposes of the  
5 award referred to in subsection (a), the Secretary of the  
6 Treasury shall strike the gold medal with suitable em-  
7 blems, devices, and inscriptions, to be determined by the  
8 Secretary.

9 (c) SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.—

10 (1) IN GENERAL.—Following the award of the  
11 gold medal in honor of the American Fighter Aces,  
12 the gold medal shall be given to the Smithsonian In-  
13 stitution, where it will be available for display as ap-  
14 propriate and available for research.

15 (2) SENSE OF THE CONGRESS.—It is the sense  
16 of the Congress that the Smithsonian Institution  
17 should make the gold medal awarded pursuant to  
18 this Act available for display elsewhere, particularly  
19 at appropriate locations associated with the Amer-  
20 ican Fighter Aces, and that preference should be  
21 given to locations affiliated with the Smithsonian In-  
22 stitution.

23 **SEC. 4. DUPLICATE MEDALS.**

24 The Secretary may strike and sell duplicates in  
25 bronze of the gold medal struck pursuant to section 3

1 under such regulations as the Secretary may prescribe, at  
2 a price sufficient to cover the cost thereof, including labor,  
3 materials, dies, use of machinery, and overhead expenses,  
4 and the cost of the gold medal.

5 **SEC. 5. NATIONAL MEDALS.**

6 The medal struck pursuant to this Act is a national  
7 medal for purposes of chapter 51 of title 31, United States  
8 Code.

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

11 (a) **AUTHORITY TO USE FUND AMOUNTS.**—There is  
12 authorized to be charged against the United States Mint  
13 Public Enterprise Fund, an amount not to exceed \$40,000  
14 to pay for the cost of the medal authorized under section  
15 3.

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

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