

117TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

# H. R. 7469

To require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint commemorative coins in recognition of James Weldon Johnson.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 7, 2022

Mr. LAWSON of Florida (for himself, Mr. COHEN, and Mr. GREEN of Texas) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Financial Services

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## A BILL

To require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint commemorative coins in recognition of James Weldon Johnson.

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 “James Weldon John-  
5 son Commemorative Coin Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 The Congress finds the following:

8 (1) James Weldon Johnson was born on June  
9 17, 1871, in Jacksonville, Florida, to a Bahamian  
10 mother, Helen Louise Dillet, and African-American

1 father, James Johnson. He had a younger brother,  
2 John Rosamund Johnson. His mother had a large  
3 influence on his interest in literature and music.

4 (2) At the age of 16, James Weldon Johnson  
5 enrolled at Atlanta University, now Clark Atlanta  
6 University, a historically Black college, and grad-  
7 uated in 1894.

8 (3) James Weldon Johnson returned to Jack-  
9 sonville following his graduation, where he served as  
10 principal of the Stanton School. He expanded the  
11 school to include Florida's first high school for Afri-  
12 can Americans, which opened in 1898.

13 (4) In 1895, James Weldon Johnson started  
14 the Daily American, Florida's first African-American  
15 newspaper.

16 (5) During this period, James Weldon Johnson  
17 was admitted to the Florida Bar in 1897. He be-  
18 came the first African American to pass the Florida  
19 Bar since the Reconstruction Era ended.

20 (6) In 1899, James Weldon Johnson wrote the  
21 poem "Lift Every Voice and Sing" to honor Abra-  
22 ham Lincoln's birthday. His brother, John  
23 Rosamund Johnson, composed the music to turn it  
24 into a song. In 1919, the National Advancement of

1 Colored People (NAACP) designated the song as the  
2 “Negro National Anthem”.

3 (7) As part of the Great Migration, James  
4 Weldon Johnson and John Rosamund Johnson  
5 moved to Harlem, New York. They became com-  
6 posers for Broadway shows and later became inte-  
7 gral figures of the Harlem Renaissance.

8 (8) After winning the election, in 1906, Presi-  
9 dent Theodore Roosevelt appointed James Weldon  
10 Johnson as U.S. Consul in Venezuela. In 1909, he  
11 was appointed as U.S. Consul in Nicaragua by  
12 President William Taft.

13 (9) Following his diplomatic service, James  
14 Weldon Johnson became a field secretary for the  
15 NAACP in 1916. In 1920, he became the first Afri-  
16 can-American executive secretary for the NAACP,  
17 where he helped increase membership, create new  
18 chapters, and organize civil rights movements across  
19 the country.

20 (10) James Weldon Johnson represented the  
21 NAACP as the chief Congressional lobbyist to en-  
22 courage passage of the Representative Leonidas  
23 Dyer anti-lynching bill. This bill went on to pass the  
24 House of Representatives in 1922, but failed in the  
25 Senate due to the filibuster.

1           (11) In 1930, after serving 10 years in the  
2           NAACP, James Weldon Johnson accepted an offer  
3           to become the Spence Chair of Creative Literature  
4           and Writing at Fisk University, a historically Black  
5           college in Nashville, Tennessee.

6           (12) In 1934, James Weldon Johnson was  
7           hired as the first Black professor at New York Uni-  
8           versity, where he taught Creative Literature and  
9           Education.

10          (13) James Weldon Johnson was an accom-  
11          plished novelist and poet. He released several poetry  
12          collections and novels, among his most popular  
13          pieces of literature were God's Trombones: Seven  
14          Negro Sermons in Verse and The Autobiography of  
15          an Ex-Colored Man.

16          (14) James Weldon Johnson passed away sud-  
17          denly in 1938. His funeral was held in Harlem, New  
18          York, where over 2,000 people attended.

19          (15) James Weldon Johnson's excellence revolu-  
20          tionized literature, music, education, politics, and  
21          law. His fearlessness to fight for equality created  
22          pathways for African Americans to proudly pursue  
23          their aspirations.

1 **SEC. 3. COIN SPECIFICATIONS.**

2 (a) DENOMINATIONS.—The Secretary of the Treas-  
3 ury (hereafter in this Act referred to as the “Secretary”)  
4 shall mint and issue the following coins in recognition and  
5 celebration of James Weldon Johnson:

6 (1) \$5 GOLD COINS.—Not more than 50,000 \$5  
7 coins, which shall—

8 (A) weigh 8.359 grams;

9 (B) have a diameter of 0.850 inches; and

10 (C) contain not less than 90-percent gold.

11 (2) \$1 SILVER COINS.—Not more than 400,000  
12 \$1 coins, which shall—

13 (A) weigh 26.73 grams;

14 (B) have a diameter of 1.500 inches; and

15 (C) contain not less than 90-percent silver.

16 (3) HALF-DOLLAR CLAD COINS.—Not more  
17 than 750,000 half-dollar coins which shall—

18 (A) weigh 11.34 grams;

19 (B) have a diameter of 1.205 inches; and

20 (C) be minted to the specifications for half-  
21 dollar coins contained in section 5112(b) of title  
22 31, United States Code.

23 (b) LEGAL TENDER.—The coins minted under this  
24 Act shall be legal tender, as provided in section 5103 of  
25 title 31, United States Code.

1           (c) NUMISMATIC ITEMS.—For purposes of sections  
2 5134 and 5136 of title 31, United States Code, all coins  
3 minted under this Act shall be considered to be numis-  
4 matic items.

5 **SEC. 4. DESIGN OF COINS.**

6           (a) DESIGN REQUIREMENTS.—

7               (1) IN GENERAL.—The design for the coins  
8 minted under this Act shall be emblematic of James  
9 Weldon Johnson.

10           (2) DESIGNATIONS AND INSCRIPTIONS.—On  
11 each coin minted under this Act, there shall be—

12               (A) a designation of the denomination of  
13 the coin;

14               (B) an inscription of the year “2024”; and

15               (C) inscriptions of the words “Liberty”,  
16 “In God We Trust”, “United States of Amer-  
17 ica”, and “E Pluribus Unum”.

18           (b) SELECTION.—The design for the coins minted  
19 under this Act shall be—

20               (1) selected by the Secretary in consultation  
21 with the Commission of Fine Arts; and

22               (2) reviewed by the Citizens Coinage Advisory  
23 Committee.

1 **SEC. 5. ISSUANCE OF COINS.**

2 (a) **QUALITY OF COINS.**—Coins minted under this  
3 Act shall be issued in uncirculated and proof qualities.

4 (b) **PERIOD FOR ISSUANCE.**—The Secretary may  
5 issue coins minted under this Act only during the 1-year  
6 period beginning on January 1, 2024.

7 **SEC. 6. SALE OF COINS.**

8 (a) **SALE PRICE.**—The coins issued under this Act  
9 shall be sold by the Secretary at a price based upon the  
10 sum of—

11 (1) the face value of the coins;

12 (2) the surcharge provided in section 7(a) with  
13 respect to such coins; and

14 (3) the cost of designing and issuing the coins  
15 (including labor, materials, dies, use of machinery,  
16 overhead expenses, marketing, and shipping).

17 (b) **BULK SALES.**—The Secretary shall make bulk  
18 sales of the coins issued under this Act at a reasonable  
19 discount.

20 (c) **PREPAID ORDERS.**—

21 (1) **IN GENERAL.**—The Secretary shall accept  
22 prepaid orders for the coins minted under this Act  
23 before the issuance of such coins.

24 (2) **DISCOUNT.**—Sale prices with respect to pre-  
25 paid orders under paragraph (1) shall be at a rea-  
26 sonable discount.

1 **SEC. 7. SURCHARGES.**

2 (a) IN GENERAL.—All sales of coins minted under  
3 this Act shall include a surcharge as follows:

4 (1) A surcharge of \$35 per coin for the \$5 coin.

5 (2) A surcharge of \$10 per coin for the \$1 coin.

6 (3) A surcharge of \$5 per coin for the half-dol-  
7 lar coin.

8 (b) DISTRIBUTION.—Subject to section 5134(f) of  
9 title 31, United States Code, all surcharges received by  
10 the Secretary from the sale of coins issued under this Act  
11 shall be promptly paid as follows, for the purpose of  
12 strengthening educational outcomes for students, with a  
13 focus on students of color, and supporting social justice  
14 efforts:

15 (1) 85 percent, divided equally between—

16 (A) the Marshall-Motley Scholars Pro-  
17 gram;

18 (B) the Stanton College Preparatory  
19 School; and

20 (C) the National Association for the Ad-  
21 vancement of Colored People (NAACP).

22 (2) 15 percent to the James Weldon Johnson  
23 Foundation.

24 **SEC. 8. FINANCIAL ASSURANCES.**

25 The Secretary shall take such actions as may be nec-  
26 essary to ensure that—



1           (1) minting and issuing coins under this Act  
2 will not result in any net cost to the United States  
3 Government; and

4           (2) no funds, including applicable surcharges,  
5 are disbursed to the recipient designated in section  
6 7 until the total cost of designing and issuing all of  
7 the coins authorized by this Act (including labor,  
8 materials, dies, use of machinery, overhead expenses,  
9 marketing, and shipping) is recovered by the United  
10 States Treasury, consistent with sections 5112(m)  
11 and 5134(f) of title 31, United States Code.

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