

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 8008

To award posthumously a Congressional Gold Medal to the Golden Thirteen,
in recognition of their contributions to the Nation.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 15, 2024

Ms. NORTON 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 the Golden Thirteen, in recognition of their contributions to the Nation.

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 “Golden Thirteen Con-
5 gressional Gold Medal Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

1 (1) In January 1944, there were no Black offi-
2 cers in the United States Navy. That month, 16
3 Black enlisted men were assembled at the Recruit
4 Training Center in Great Lakes, Illinois, for officer
5 training.

6 (2) These men were expected to complete the
7 training in 8 weeks, while the normal officer training
8 course was 16 weeks.

9 (3) These men supported each other, including
10 by placing blankets over their windows and studying
11 as a group by flashlight at night. Each man brought
12 to the group his own expertise to help the others.

13 (4) When the course was over, all 16 men
14 passed their exams, leading some to claim that they
15 had cheated. The men were forced to retake certain
16 exams and scored even higher.

17 (5) The average grade for these men on the
18 exams was a 3.89 out of a 4.00, the highest average
19 of any class in Navy history at that time.

20 (6) Despite all 16 men having passed the
21 course, on February 24, 1944, the Navy commis-
22 sioned only 12 of them, and a 13th was made a
23 chief warrant officer. Because the Navy had as-
24 sumed a 25-percent attrition rate, only 12 officer
25 commissions were anticipated. As the class had a

1 100-percent passage rate, the other three men were
2 returned to the enlisted corps, with no reason given.

3 (7) During their careers, these men oversaw all-
4 Black units or the training of Black recruits. One
5 would go on to make his career in the Navy after
6 World War II, and the rest would return to civilian
7 life.

8 (8) In the 1970s, Captain Edward Secrest, a
9 former instructor, gave the group the name “Golden
10 Thirteen”.

11 (9) In 1982, these men were formally recog-
12 nized with a first-ever reunion at sea aboard the
13 USS KIDD–993.

14 (10) The members of the Golden Thirteen were
15 Jesse Walter Arbor; Phillip G. Barnes; Samuel Ed-
16 ward Barnes; Dalton Louis Baugh, Sr.; George Clin-
17 ton Cooper; Reginald Ernest Goodwin; James Ed-
18 ward Hair; Charles Byrd Lear; Graham Edward
19 Martin; Dennis Denmark Nelson; John Walter
20 Reagan; Frank Ellis Sublett, Jr.; and William Syl-
21 vester White. The three members who passed their
22 exams but not given a commission were Augustus
23 Alves; J.B. Pinkney; and Lewis “Mummy” Williams.

1 **SEC. 3. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.**

2 (a) PRESENTATION AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of
3 the House of Representatives and the President pro tem-
4 pore of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements
5 for the posthumous presentation, on behalf of the Con-
6 gress, of a gold medal of appropriate design in commemo-
7 ration to the Golden Thirteen, in recognition of their con-
8 tributions to the Nation.

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

15 (c) SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.—

16 (1) IN GENERAL.—Following the award of the
17 gold medal under subsection (a), the gold medal
18 shall be given to the Smithsonian Institution, where
19 it shall be available for display as appropriate and
20 made available for research.

21 (2) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of
22 Congress that the Smithsonian Institution should
23 make the gold medal received under paragraph (1)
24 available for display elsewhere, particularly at other
25 appropriate locations associated with the Golden
26 Thirteen.

1 **SEC. 4. DUPLICATE MEDALS.**

2 The Secretary may strike and sell duplicates in
3 bronze of the gold medal struck under section 3, at a price
4 sufficient to cover the cost thereof, including labor, mate-
5 rials, dies, use of machinery, and overhead expenses.

6 **SEC. 5. STATUS OF MEDALS.**

7 (a) NATIONAL MEDALS.—Medals struck pursuant to
8 this Act are national medals for purposes of chapter 51
9 of title 31, United States Code.

10 (b) NUMISMATIC ITEMS.—For purposes of sections
11 5134 and 5136 of title 31, United States Code, all medals
12 struck under this Act shall be considered to be numismatic
13 items.

14 **SEC. 6. AUTHORITY TO USE FUND AMOUNTS; PROCEEDS OF**
15 **SALE.**

16 (a) AUTHORITY TO USE FUND AMOUNTS.—There is
17 authorized to be charged against the United States Mint
18 Public Enterprise Fund such amounts as may be nec-
19 essary to pay for the costs of the medals struck pursuant
20 to this Act.

21 (b) PROCEEDS OF SALE.—The amounts received
22 from the sale of duplicate bronze medals authorized under
23 section 4 shall be deposited into the United States Mint
24 Public Enterprise Fund.

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