

112TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 1993

To posthumously award a Congressional Gold Medal to Lena Horne in recognition of her achievements and contributions to American culture and the civil rights movement.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

DECEMBER 14, 2011

Mr. NELSON of Florida (for himself, Ms. COLLINS, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, and Mr. SCHUMER) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs

A BILL

To posthumously award a Congressional Gold Medal to Lena Horne in recognition of her achievements and contributions to American culture and the civil rights movement.

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 “Lena Horne Recogni-
5 tion Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 The Congress finds as follows:

8 (1) Lena Mary Calhoun Horne was born on
9 June 30, 1917, in Brooklyn, New York. At the age

1 of 16, Lena Horne was hired as a dancer in the cho-
2 rus of Harlem's famous Cotton Club, where she was
3 introduced to such legendary jazz performers as
4 Duke Ellington, Cab Calloway, Count Basie, Ethel
5 Waters, and Billie Holiday.

6 (2) In 1940, she became one of the first Afri-
7 can-American women to perform with an all-White
8 band when she toured with Charlie Barnet's jazz
9 band as its featured singer.

10 (3) She was discovered by a Metro-Goldwyn-
11 Mayer (MGM) talent scout and became the first Afri-
12 can-American artist to sign a long-term contract
13 with a major studio.

14 (4) Despite her extraordinary beauty and tal-
15 ent, Lena Horne was often limited to minor acting
16 roles because of her race.

17 (5) Scenes in which she did sing were cut out
18 when they were sent to local distributors in the
19 South and studio executives cast another actress as
20 Julie in the film version of "Show Boat" instead of
21 Lena Horne because they did not want the show to
22 star an African-American actress. However, Lena
23 Horne dazzled audiences and critics in a number of
24 films, including "Cabin in the Sky" and "Stormy
25 Weather".

1 (6) During World War II, Lena Horne toured
2 extensively with the United Service Organizations
3 (USO) on the West Coast and in the South in sup-
4 port of the troops and expressed outrage about the
5 way African-American soldiers were treated.

6 (7) She refused to sing for segregated audiences
7 or to groups in which German prisoners of war were
8 seated in front of African-American servicemen.

9 (8) During the period of McCarthyism in the
10 1950s, Lena Horne was blacklisted as a communist
11 for 7 years because of her civil rights activism and
12 friendship with Paul Robeson and W.E.B. Du Bois.

13 (9) In 1957, Lena Horne recorded Lena Horne
14 at the Waldorf-Astoria, which reached the Top 10
15 and became the best-selling album by a female sing-
16 er in RCA Victor's history.

17 (10) Lena Horne rose to international stardom
18 and toured the world, sharing the stage with such
19 names as Count Basie, Tony Bennett, Billy
20 Eckstine, Vic Damone, and Harry Belafonte, and
21 also starred in musical and television specials with
22 such giants as Judy Garland, Bing Crosby, and
23 Frank Sinatra.

24 (11) Lena Horne used her fame to become a
25 powerful voice for civil rights and equality.

1 (12) In 1963, she participated in the historic
2 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, at
3 which Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his im-
4 mortal “I Have a Dream” speech.

5 (13) Lena Horne also performed at rallies
6 throughout the country for the National Council for
7 Negro Women and worked with the National Asso-
8 ciation for the Advancement of Colored People
9 (NAACP), of which she was a member from the age
10 of 2, the Delta Sigma Theta sorority, and the Urban
11 League.

12 (14) Through the end of the 20th century,
13 Lena Horne continued to entertain large audiences
14 of all ages and backgrounds. In 1981, she captivated
15 audiences with her one-woman Broadway show,
16 “Lena Horne: The Lady and Her Music”, which en-
17 joyed a 14-month run before going on tour, and
18 earned her a special Tony Award and two Grammy
19 Awards.

20 (15) In 2002, 73 years after the Academy
21 Awards were first awarded, Halle Berry became the
22 first African-American woman to win an Oscar for
23 Best Actress and recognized in her acceptance
24 speech how Lena Horne paved the way for her and
25 other African-American actresses.

1 (16) Lena Horne passed away in New York
2 City on May 9, 2010, at the age of 92.

3 (17) Lena Horne was an entertainer, activist,
4 and mother who used her beauty, talent, and intel-
5 ligence to fight racial discrimination and injustice
6 and rise to international stardom.

7 (18) A symbol of elegance and grace, she enter-
8 tained people of all walks of life for over 60 years,
9 and broke barriers for future generations.

10 **SEC. 3. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.**

11 (a) **PRESENTATION AUTHORIZED.**—The Speaker of
12 the House of Representatives and the President pro tem-
13 pore of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements
14 for the posthumous presentation, on behalf of the Con-
15 gress, of a gold medal of appropriate design in commemo-
16 ration of Lena Horne in recognition of her achievements
17 and contributions to American culture and the civil rights
18 movement.

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

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

2 The Secretary may strike and sell duplicates in
3 bronze of the gold medal struck pursuant to section 2,
4 under such regulations as the Secretary may prescribe, at
5 a price sufficient to cover the cost thereof, including labor,
6 materials, dies, use of machinery, and overhead expenses,
7 and the cost of the gold medal.

8 **SEC. 5. STATUS OF MEDALS.**

9 (a) NATIONAL MEDALS.—The medals struck pursu-
10 ant to this Act are national medals for purposes of chapter
11 51 of title 31, United States Code.

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

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

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

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

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