

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 2647

To award a Congressional gold medal to the 369th Infantry Regiment, commonly known as the “Harlem Hellfighters”, in recognition of their bravery and outstanding service during World War I.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

AUGUST 5, 2021

Mrs. GILLIBRAND (for herself 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 award a Congressional gold medal to the 369th Infantry Regiment, commonly known as the “Harlem Hellfighters”, in recognition of their bravery and outstanding service during World War I.

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 “Harlem Hellfighters
5 Congressional Gold Medal Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

1 (1) When the United States officially entered
2 World War I in April 1917, the Armed Forces were
3 still segregated, even though African-American sol-
4 diers had served and distinguished themselves in
5 every war since the Revolutionary War, and even the
6 Colonial Wars preceding the American Revolution.

7 (2) After several years of advocacy and debate,
8 in 1916 the State of New York authorized the re-
9 cruitment of the 15th New York National Guard
10 Regiment, which was called to Federal service on
11 July 25, 1917, soon after arriving for training at
12 Camp Whitman, New York.

13 (3) The 15th completed its basic military prac-
14 tice training at Camp Whitman, New York.

15 (4) To receive combat training, the 15th re-
16 ported, on October 8, 1917, to Camp Wadsworth, in
17 Spartanburg, South Carolina, where it experienced
18 many incidents of racial discrimination.

19 (5) Consequently, the government agreed to re-
20 move the 15th from Camp Wadsworth, but, instead
21 of receiving further training, the regiment began
22 preparing for deployment to France in November.

23 (6) The 15th arrived in Saint Nazaire, France,
24 on January 1, 1918, where it was redesignated the
25 369th Infantry Regiment.

1 (7) Partly because many White soldiers within
2 the American Expeditionary Forces (hereinafter, the
3 “AEF”) refused to perform combat duty with Black
4 soldiers, members of the 369th were initially as-
5 signed manual labor tasks, such as loading and un-
6 loading supplies, and constructing roads and rail-
7 roads.

8 (8) After receiving pressure from the 369th reg-
9 imental commander about not having a combat mis-
10 sion, the AEF attached the 369th to the French
11 Fourth Army.

12 (9) By mid-March of 1918, the 369th went to
13 the Argonne Forest with the French 16th Division
14 for training and soon entered the trenches.

15 (10) The 369th encountered its first German
16 soldiers in combat in April, 1918.

17 (11) In May of 1918, Private Henry Johnson
18 of the 369th received the French Croix de Guerre,
19 with Palm, for extraordinary valor, becoming one of
20 the first American soldiers to be awarded this honor.

21 (12) Johnson also belatedly received a Purple
22 Heart, was awarded the Distinguished Service
23 Cross, and, in 2015, was awarded the Medal of
24 Honor.

1 (13) Throughout the remainder of the spring
2 and into the summer the 369th served at Minacourt,
3 in the Champagne-Marne Defensive, and during the
4 Aisne-Marne Offensive in support of the French
5 161st Infantry Division.

6 (14) As summer turned to autumn, the 369th
7 went on to participate in the Meuse-Argonne offen-
8 sive, where it captured the important village of
9 Sechault despite sustaining severe losses.

10 (15) On October 14, 1918, the 369th advanced
11 to Alsace.

12 (16) On November 20, 1918, the 369th reached
13 the banks of the Rhine River as part of the French
14 Army of Occupation, the first Allied unit to do so.

15 (17) The 369th was relieved of its assignment
16 with the French 161st Division in December, 1918,
17 and elements of the regiment sailed for New York
18 in late January and early February, 1919.

19 (18) The 369th Infantry Regiment received a
20 parade up 5th Avenue in New York City on Feb-
21 ruary 17, 1919, receiving applause and cheers from
22 hundreds of thousands of onlookers.

23 (19) The 369th was demobilized on February
24 28, 1919.

1 (20) Over 170 individual members of the 369th
2 received the Croix de Guerre, many were awarded
3 the Distinguished Service Cross, and the 369th was
4 awarded a unit citation.

5 (21) It is generally believed that the 369th was
6 dubbed the “Harlem Hellfighters” by German sol-
7 diers, who found the men to be incredibly deter-
8 mined and courageous in battle.

9 (22) The 369th was the first regiment of Afri-
10 can Americans to deploy overseas during World War
11 I and spent 191 days on the front line in World War
12 I, more than any other American regimental sized
13 unit.

14 (23) The 369th never lost a foot of ground nor
15 had a man taken prisoner, despite suffering a high
16 number of casualties.

17 **SEC. 3. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.**

18 (a) AWARD AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of the
19 House of Representatives and the President pro tempore
20 of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements for the
21 award, on behalf of the Congress, of a gold medal of ap-
22 propriate design to the 369th Infantry Regiment, com-
23 monly known as the “Harlem Hellfighters”, in recognition
24 of their bravery and outstanding service during World
25 War I.

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

6 (c) SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.—

7 (1) IN GENERAL.—Following the award of the
8 gold medal in honor of the 369th Infantry Regiment,
9 the “Harlem Hellfighters”, the gold medal shall be
10 given to the Smithsonian Institution, where it will be
11 displayed as appropriate and made available for re-
12 search.

13 (2) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of
14 Congress that the Smithsonian Institution should
15 make the gold medal awarded pursuant to this Act
16 available for display elsewhere, particularly at other
17 locations associated with the Harlem Hellfighters.

18 **SEC. 4. DUPLICATE MEDALS.**

19 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may strike and sell
20 duplicates in bronze of the gold medal struck under sec-
21 tion 3, at a price sufficient to cover the costs of the bronze
22 medals, including labor, materials, dies, use of machinery,
23 and overhead expenses.

24 (b) PROCEEDS OF SALES.—The amounts received
25 from the sale of duplicate medals under subsection (a)

1 shall be deposited in the United States Mint Public Enter-
2 prise Fund.

3 (c) **AUTHORITY TO USE FUND AMOUNTS.**—There is
4 authorized to be charged against the United States Mint
5 Public Enterprise Fund such amounts as may be nec-
6 essary to pay for the costs of the medals struck under
7 this Act.

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

9 The gold medal struck pursuant to this Act is a na-
10 tional medal for purposes of chapter 51 of title 31, United
11 States Code.

12 **SEC. 6. DETERMINATION OF BUDGETARY EFFECTS.**

13 The budgetary effects of this Act, for the purpose of
14 complying with the Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2010,
15 shall be determined by reference to the latest statement
16 titled “Budgetary Effects of PAYGO Legislation” for this
17 Act, submitted for printing in the Congressional Record
18 by the Chairman of the House Budget Committee, pro-
19 vided that such statement has been submitted prior to the
20 vote on passage.

○