

117TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 3607

To award a Congressional gold medal, collectively, to the First Rhode Island Regiment, in recognition of their dedicated service during the Revolutionary War.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

FEBRUARY 9, 2022

Mr. WHITEHOUSE (for himself, Mr. CASSIDY, Mr. REED, and Mr. GRAHAM) 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, collectively, to the First Rhode Island Regiment, in recognition of their dedicated service during the Revolutionary War.

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 “First Rhode Island
5 Regiment Congressional Gold Medal Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress makes the following findings:

8 (1) During the winter at Valley Forge, from
9 1777–1778, the Continental Army had difficulty re-

1 recruiting the necessary quotas of men set by the Con-
2 gress.

3 (2) At the same time, the State of Rhode Island
4 was ordered to supply two battalions while faced
5 with the occupation of the City of Newport by the
6 British.

7 (3) In January 1778, at the urging of Brigadier
8 General James Varnum, General George Washington
9 wrote to Governor Nicholas Cooke of the State of
10 Rhode Island requesting assistance recruiting men
11 for the Continental Line.

12 (4) On February 14, 1778, the Rhode Island
13 General Assembly voted to allow the enlistment of
14 “every able-bodied negro, mulatto, or Indian man
15 slave”.

16 (5) In addition, the Rhode Island General As-
17 sembly provided that any enlisted slave “upon his
18 passing muster before Colonel Christopher Greene,
19 be immediately discharged from the service of his
20 master or mistress, and be absolutely free as though
21 he had never been incumbered and be incumbered
22 with any kind of servitude or slavery.”.

23 (6) As a result, between February 1778 and
24 June 1778, Colonel Christopher Greene, Lt. Colonel
25 Jeremiah Olney and Major Samuel Ward recruited

1 almost 200 men of African heritage and Indigenous
2 descent who formed the core of the First Rhode Is-
3 land Regiment.

4 (7) The First Rhode Island Regiment became
5 among the first units in American History in which
6 men of every race and ethnicity were recruited to
7 serve.

8 (8) On August 28, 1778, at the Battle of
9 Rhode Island, following an attempted siege of Brit-
10 ish-occupied Newport along with the newly allied
11 French fleet, the First Rhode Island Regiment acted
12 heroically in holding back Hessian forces and caus-
13 ing them to retreat.

14 (9) During the Battle of Rhode Island, the
15 First Rhode Island Regiment's losses included three
16 killed, nine wounded and eleven missing soldiers.

17 (10) For an additional 5 years, the First Rhode
18 Island Regiment fought bravely to win American
19 independence including at Fort Oswego, Saratoga,
20 and Yorktown.

21 (11) On June 13, 1783, at Saratoga, the First
22 Rhode Island Regiment was demobilized.

23 (12) Their commander, Colonel Jeremiah
24 Olney, praised the Regiment for "faithfully pre-
25 serving in the best of causes, in every stage of serv-

1 ice, with unexampled fortitude and patience through
 2 all the danger and toils of a long and severe war”.

3 (13) Afterwards, some veterans of the First
 4 Rhode Island Regiment had to consistently resist ef-
 5 forts at re-enslavement and fought for back wages
 6 from the Rhode Island General Assembly.

7 (14) According to the Rhode Island State Ar-
 8 chives, the First Rhode Island Regiment included at
 9 least the following soldiers: Babcock, Priamus (Pri-
 10 mus); Bent, Prince; Bours, Cato; Brown, Priamus
 11 (Primus); Burk, Africa; Burroughs, John; Car-
 12 penter, Cudgo; Champlin, Dick; Champlin, Jack;
 13 Champlin, July; Champlin, Newport; Champlin,
 14 Sharper; Champlin, York; Clark, James;
 15 Coddington, Jack; Fones, Jack; Gardner, Cuff;
 16 Gardner, Hercules; Gardner, Minkl; Gardner,
 17 Preamus (Primus); Gardner, Rutter; Gray, Ebe-
 18 nezer; Green, Cuff; Greene, Cato; Greene, Jack;
 19 Greene, Pero; Greene, William; Hammond, Prince;
 20 Harriss, Cesar; Hazard, Backus; Hazard, Jabin;
 21 Hazard, Jacob; Hazard, Peter; Hazard, Peter;
 22 Lefavour, Thom; Mason, Warsen; Mawney, Cyrus;
 23 Minturn, Jack; Mowrey, Pero; Nichols, Thomas;
 24 Perry, Ganset; Phillips, Philow; Pierce, Titus; Pot-
 25 ter, David; Randall, Prince; Rhodes, Bristol; Rhodes,

1 Priamus; Rhodes, Richard; Rhodes, Samuel; Rich-
2 mond, Ebenezer; Robinson, Mingo; Rodman, Isaac;
3 Rodman, Mingo; Rodman, Prince; Rose, Cesar;
4 Saltonstall, Brittain; Saunders, Sampson; Sheldon,
5 Cesar; Slave; Slave; Smith, Juba; Sweeling, Query;
6 Talbot, Sigby; Tanner, Quam; Tillinghast, Cuff;
7 Updike, Cesar; Updike, Moses; Vaughan, Prince;
8 Vernon, Cato; Watson, Fortune; Wells, Cesar;
9 Wickes, Nat; and Willbour, Boston.

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

11 (a) AWARD AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of the
12 House of Representatives and the President pro tempore
13 of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements for the
14 award, on behalf of the Congress, of a single gold medal
15 of appropriate design to the First Rhode Island Regiment,
16 collectively in recognition of their dedicated service during
17 the Revolutionary War.

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

24 (c) RHODE ISLAND STATE LIBRARY.—

1 (1) IN GENERAL.—Following the award of the
2 gold medal in honor of the First Rhode Island Regi-
3 ment of the Revolutionary War under subsection (a),
4 the gold medal shall be given to the Rhode Island
5 State Library, where it will be displayed as appro-
6 priate and made available for research.

7 (2) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of
8 Congress that the Rhode Island State Library
9 should make the gold medal received under para-
10 graph (1) available for display elsewhere, particu-
11 larly at other appropriate locations associated with
12 the First Rhode Island Regiment of the Revolu-
13 tionary War.

14 **SEC. 4. DUPLICATE MEDALS.**

15 Under such regulations as the Secretary may pre-
16 scribe, the Secretary may strike and sell duplicates in
17 bronze of the gold medal struck under section 3, at a price
18 sufficient to cover the costs of the medals, including labor,
19 materials, dies, use of machinery, and overhead expenses.

20 **SEC. 5. STATUS OF MEDALS.**

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

1 (b) NUMISMATIC ITEMS.—For purposes of section
2 5134 of title 31, United States Code, all medals struck
3 under this Act shall be considered to be numismatic items.

4 **SEC. 6. AUTHORITY TO USE FUND AMOUNTS; PROCEEDS OF**
5 **SALE.**

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

11 (b) PROCEEDS OF SALE.—Amounts received from the
12 sale of duplicate bronze medals authorized under section
13 4 shall be deposited into the United States Mint Public
14 Enterprise Fund.

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