

114TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 527

To award a Congressional Gold Medal to the Foot Soldiers who participated in Bloody Sunday, Turnaround Tuesday, or the final Selma to Montgomery Voting Rights March in March of 1965, which served as a catalyst for the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

FEBRUARY 12, 2015

Mr. SESSIONS (for himself, Mr. BOOKER, Mr. SHELBY, Mr. SCHUMER, Mr. BLUNT, Ms. BALDWIN, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. DAINES, Mrs. BOXER, Mr. BURR, Mr. DONNELLY, Mr. DURBIN, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. FRANKEN, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. KAINE, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. MENENDEZ, Ms. MIKULSKI, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. NELSON, Mr. PETERS, Mr. SANDERS, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Ms. WARREN, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mr. ISAKSON, Mr. PORTMAN, Mr. CORKER, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. SASSE, Mr. JOHNSON, Mr. COTTON, Ms. MURKOWSKI, Mr. ALEXANDER, Mr. CRUZ, Mr. RISCH, Mr. WICKER, Ms. AYOTTE, Mr. BARRASSO, Mr. SCOTT, Mr. COATS, Mr. PERDUE, Mr. COCHRAN, Mr. HATCH, Mrs. CAPITO, Mr. HOEVEN, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. MURPHY, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. REID, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. THUNE, Mr. HEINRICH, Mr. SCHATZ, Mr. MCCONNELL, Mr. REED, Mr. INHOFE, Mr. COONS, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. BROWN, Mr. BENNET, Mr. CARDIN, and Mrs. MCCASKILL) 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 Foot Soldiers who participated in Bloody Sunday, Turnaround Tuesday, or the final Selma to Montgomery Voting Rights March in March of 1965, which served as a catalyst for the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

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. FINDINGS.**

4 The Congress finds the following:

5 (1) March 7, 2015, will mark 50 years since the
6 brave Foot Soldiers of the Voting Rights Movement
7 first attempted to march from Selma to Montgomery
8 on “Bloody Sunday” in protest against the denial of
9 their right to vote, and were brutally assaulted by
10 Alabama state troopers.

11 (2) Beginning in 1964, members of the Student
12 Nonviolent Coordinating Committee attempted to
13 register African-Americans to vote throughout the
14 state of Alabama.

15 (3) These efforts were designed to ensure that
16 every American citizen would be able to exercise
17 their constitutional right to vote and have their
18 voices heard.

19 (4) By December of 1964, many of these efforts
20 remained unsuccessful. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.,
21 working with leaders from the Student Nonviolent
22 Coordinating Committee and the Southern Christian
23 Leadership Conference, began to organize protests
24 throughout Alabama.

1 (5) On March 7, 1965, over 500 voting rights
2 marchers known as “Foot Soldiers” gathered on the
3 Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama in peace-
4 ful protest of the denial of their most sacred and
5 constitutionally protected right—the right to vote.

6 (6) Led by John Lewis of the Student Non-
7 violent Coordinating Committee and Rev. Hosea
8 Williams of the Southern Christian Leadership Con-
9 ference, these Foot Soldiers began the march to-
10 wards the Alabama State Capitol in Montgomery,
11 Alabama.

12 (7) As the Foot Soldiers crossed the Edmund
13 Pettus Bridge, they were confronted by a wall of
14 Alabama state troopers who brutally attacked and
15 beat them.

16 (8) Americans across the country witnessed this
17 tragic turn of events as news stations broadcasted
18 the brutality on a day that would be later known as
19 “Bloody Sunday.”

20 (9) Two days later on Tuesday, March 9, 1965,
21 nearly 2,500 Foot Soldiers led by Dr. Martin Luther
22 King risked their lives once more and attempted a
23 second peaceful march starting at the Edmund
24 Pettus Bridge. This second attempted march was
25 later known as “Turnaround Tuesday.”

1 (10) Fearing for the safety of these Foot Sol-
2 diers who received no protection from federal or
3 state authorities during this second march, Dr. King
4 led the marchers to the base of the Edmund Pettus
5 Bridge and stopped. Dr. King kneeled and offered a
6 prayer of solidarity and walked back to the church.

7 (11) President Lyndon B. Johnson, inspired by
8 the bravery and determination of these Foot Soldiers
9 and the atrocities they endured, announced his plan
10 for a voting rights bill aimed at securing the pre-
11 cious right to vote for all citizens during an address
12 to Congress on March 15, 1965.

13 (12) On March 17, 1965, one week after
14 “Turnaround Tuesday”, U.S. District Judge Frank
15 M. Johnson ruled the Foot Soldiers had a First
16 Amendment right to petition the government
17 through peaceful protest, and ordered federal agents
18 to provide full protection to the Foot Soldiers during
19 the Selma to Montgomery Voting Rights March.

20 (13) Judge Johnson’s decision overturned Ala-
21 bama Governor George Wallace’s prohibition on the
22 protest due to public safety concerns.

23 (14) On March 21, 1965, under the court
24 order, the U.S. Army, the federalized Alabama Na-
25 tional Guard, and countless federal agents and mar-

1 shals escorted nearly 8,000 Foot Soldiers from the
2 start of their heroic journey in Selma, Alabama to
3 their safe arrival on the steps of the Alabama State
4 Capitol Building on March 25, 1965.

5 (15) The extraordinary bravery and sacrifice
6 these Foot Soldiers displayed in pursuit of a peace-
7 ful march from Selma to Montgomery brought na-
8 tional attention to the struggle for equal voting
9 rights, and served as the catalyst for Congress to
10 pass the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which President
11 Johnson signed into law on August 6, 1965.

12 (16) To commemorate the 50th anniversary of
13 the Voting Rights Movement and the passage of the
14 Voting Rights Act of 1965, it is befitting that Con-
15 gress bestow the highest civilian honor, the Congres-
16 sional Gold Medal, in 2015, to the Foot Soldiers
17 who participated in Bloody Sunday, Turnaround
18 Tuesday or the final Selma to Montgomery Voting
19 Rights March during March of 1965, which served
20 as a catalyst for the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

21 **SEC. 2. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.**

22 (a) PRESENTATION AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of
23 the House of Representatives and the President Pro Tem-
24 pore of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements
25 for the presentation, on behalf of Congress, of a gold

1 medal of appropriate design to the Foot Soldiers who par-
2 ticipated in Bloody Sunday, Turnaround Tuesday, or the
3 final Selma to Montgomery Voting Rights March during
4 March of 1965, which served as a catalyst for the Voting
5 Rights Act of 1965.

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

12 (c) AWARD OF MEDAL.—Following the award of the
13 gold medal described in subsection (a), the medal shall be
14 given to the Selma Interpretative Center in Selma, Ala-
15 bama, where it shall be available for display or temporary
16 loan to be displayed elsewhere, as appropriate.

17 **SEC. 3. DUPLICATE MEDALS.**

18 The Secretary may strike and sell duplicates in
19 bronze of the gold medal struck pursuant to section 2
20 under such regulations as the Secretary may prescribe, at
21 a price sufficient to cover the cost thereof, including labor,
22 materials, dies, use of machinery, and overhead expenses,
23 and the cost of the gold medal.

1 **SEC. 4. STATUS OF MEDALS.**

2 (a) NATIONAL MEDALS.—The medals struck pursu-
3 ant to this Act are national medals for purposes of chapter
4 51 of title 31, United States Code.

5 (b) NUMISMATIC ITEMS.—For purposes of sections
6 5134 and 5136 of title 31, United States Code, all medals
7 struck under this Act shall be considered to be numismatic
8 items.

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