

109TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

# H. R. 5011

To award posthumously a congressional gold medal to John Pehle in recognition of his contributions to the Nation in helping rescue Jews and other minorities from the Holocaust during World War II.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 16, 2006

Ms. WOOLSEY introduced the following bill; which was referred to the  
Committee on Financial Services

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## A BILL

To award posthumously a congressional gold medal to John Pehle in recognition of his contributions to the Nation in helping rescue Jews and other minorities from the Holocaust during World War II.

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       Congress makes the following findings:

5               (1) Approximately 6,000,000 Jews were slaugh-  
6       tered pursuant to Adolf Hitler's diabolical plan for  
7       the total extermination of the Jews during the reign  
8       of the Third Reich, and even more would have per-

1       ished had it not been for the heroic efforts of John  
2       Pehle to persuade President Franklin Roosevelt of  
3       the need for extraordinary measures.

4           (2) As a 33-year-old lawyer working in the For-  
5       eign Funds Control unit of the Department of the  
6       Treasury of the United States, John Pehle, along  
7       with his colleagues at the Department of the Treas-  
8       ury, worked to overcome bureaucratic inertia within  
9       the United States Government during World War II  
10      in order to rescue many Jews from the extermi-  
11      nation camps of the Nazi Holocaust.

12          (3) By researching and citing pertinent and  
13      overlooked precedents, in December 1943, John  
14      Pehle was instrumental in helping secure the first li-  
15      cense of communications in enemy-occupied territory  
16      and a remittance of \$25,000 that was issued by the  
17      United States Government to Gerhart Riegner, the  
18      representative of the World Jewish Congress in  
19      Switzerland, for the rescue of Jews in France and  
20      Romania.

21          (4) Overcoming internal communication prob-  
22      lems within the United States Government, John  
23      Pehle provided critical information about the rap-  
24      idly-worsening plight of deported Jews from many  
25      parts of Europe to his superiors—Secretary of the

1 Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Jr., General Counsel  
2 Randolph Paul, and Assistant General Counsel Jo-  
3 siah E. Dubois—and together they determined to in-  
4 form President Franklin Roosevelt of the urgent  
5 need for corrective action.

6 (5) John Pehle accompanied Secretary Morgen-  
7 thau and Randolph Paul to meet with President  
8 Franklin Roosevelt on January 16, 1944, to deliver  
9 a vitally important document titled Personal Report  
10 to the President, which Pehle, Morgenthau, and  
11 Paul were instrumental in compiling and which had  
12 first been entitled Report to the Secretary on the  
13 Acquiescence of This Government in the Murder of  
14 the Jews.

15 (6) On January 22, 1944, only 6 days after re-  
16 ceiving the Personal Report to the President, and in  
17 reaction to it, President Franklin Roosevelt issued  
18 Executive Order 9417, establishing the War Refugee  
19 Board, and appointed John Pehle as the Acting Ex-  
20 ecutive Director of the Board.

21 (7) Thanks largely to the heroic efforts and un-  
22 paralleled persistence of John Pehle, it became the  
23 policy of the United States Government to imple-  
24 ment “the development of plans and programs . . .  
25 for a) the rescue, transportation, maintenance, and

1 relief of the victims of enemy oppression, and b) the  
2 establishment of havens of temporary refuge for  
3 such victims”; Pehle became responsible directly to  
4 the President in implementing that policy Govern-  
5 ment-wide.

6 (8) In one of his first official acts at the War  
7 Refugee Board, John Pehle, on January 25, 1944,  
8 drafted an overdue and critically important diplo-  
9 matic cable, sent to all United States embassies,  
10 consulates, and other diplomatic missions, that or-  
11 dered “action be taken to forestall the plot of the  
12 Nazis to exterminate the Jews and other persecuted  
13 minorities in Europe”.

14 (9) Working with a staff of no more than 30  
15 employees in Washington, D.C., Pehle spearheaded  
16 the development of new programs to increase the  
17 flow of refugees from Nazi persecution to neutral  
18 countries in Europe (Turkey, Portugal, Switzerland,  
19 Spain, and Sweden), who, in turn, would funnel  
20 them to Northern Africa, Palestine, and North and  
21 South America, thus making room for new arrivals  
22 from Nazi-occupied territories.

23 (10) In 1944, Pehle and his colleagues in the  
24 War Refugee Board cleared the way for the Inter-  
25 national Red Cross to provide food parcels to “state-

1 less” civilians in the internment camps, to support  
2 and protect 3,000,000 Allied and Axis prisoners of  
3 war, and to streamline Federal licensing procedures  
4 for the transmission of funds to pay for Red Cross  
5 relief supplies and rescue operations, thus saving the  
6 lives of thousands of Jews and other internees.

7 (11) President Franklin Roosevelt’s promotion  
8 of John Pehle from Acting Executive Director to  
9 Executive Director of the War Refugee Board on  
10 March 24, 1944, coincided with the issuance of a di-  
11 rect warning at the presidential news conference on  
12 the same day, prepared by the Board, that none of  
13 those who participated in the wholesale systematic  
14 murder of the Jews of Europe—“one of the blackest  
15 crimes of all history”—shall go unpunished.

16 (12) In April 1944, at the direction of John  
17 Pehle, the War Refugee Board urged all neutral na-  
18 tions to increase their diplomatic missions in Hun-  
19 gary to help prevent the accelerating deportation of  
20 Jews to Auschwitz, Birkenau, and other Nazi exter-  
21 mination camps and begin providing vital funding  
22 and other resources such as lists of corrupt Hun-  
23 garian passport officials, undercover anti-Nazis, and  
24 other sympathizers to assist the ingenious and heroic  
25 struggle of Raoul Wallenberg, whose extraordinary

1       personal efforts resulted in the rescue of more than  
2       100,000 Hungarian Jews from Nazi concentration  
3       camps.

4           (13) John Pehle spearheaded the valiant efforts  
5       of the War Refugee Board, which was responsible  
6       for the direct rescue of several hundred thousand  
7       men, women, and children from the Holocaust and  
8       the sustenance of thousands of Holocaust survivors  
9       during 1944 and 1945, thus breathing new life into  
10      the American tradition of helping the oppressed and  
11      persecuted in the name of human decency.

12   **SEC. 2. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.**

13       (a) PRESENTATION AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of  
14   the House of Representatives and the President Pro Tem-  
15   pore of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements  
16   for the presentation, on behalf of Congress, of a gold  
17   medal of appropriate design, to the family or personal rep-  
18   resentative of John Pehle in recognition of his service to  
19   the Nation.

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

1 **SEC. 3. 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. 4. STATUS OF MEDALS.**

9       (a) NATIONAL MEDALS.—The medals struck under  
10 this Act are national medals for purposes of chapter 51  
11 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. 5. 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 3 shall be deposited into the United States Mint Public  
25 Enterprise Fund.

