

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 4621

To award a Congressional Gold Medal to the 320th Barrage Balloon Battalion, collectively, in recognition of their extraordinary heroism and life-saving actions during the D-Day invasion, and their significant contributions to the success of the Allied forces during World War II.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 22, 2025

Mr. VEASEY (for himself, Mr. KELLY of Mississippi, Mr. CARSON, Mr. KHANNA, Ms. DELAURO, Mr. GARAMENDI, Ms. STRICKLAND, Mr. CARTER of Louisiana, Mr. DAVIS of North Carolina, Mr. SMITH of Nebraska, Ms. SHERRILL, and Mr. LAWLER) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Financial Services, and in addition to the Committee on House Administration, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To award a Congressional Gold Medal to the 320th Barrage Balloon Battalion, collectively, in recognition of their extraordinary heroism and life-saving actions during the D-Day invasion, and their significant contributions to the success of the Allied forces 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,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “320th Barrage Balloon
3 Battalion Gold Medal Act”.

4 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

5 Congress finds the following:

6 (1) The 320th Barrage Balloon Battalion was
7 formed on September 21, 1942, just a year after the
8 Coastal Artillery Corps took over responsibility for
9 barrage balloons from the Army Air Corps. Their
10 first combat assignment was at the Utah and
11 Omaha beaches in Normandy, France, for the D-
12 Day invasion.

13 (2) The Soldiers of the Battalion played a cru-
14 cial role in protecting the Allied forces during the D-
15 Day invasion by deploying barrage balloons to pre-
16 vent enemy aircraft from targeting the invasion
17 forces directly. Their bravery and determination ex-
18 emplify the valor and dedication of African-American
19 soldiers during World War II.

20 (3) The 320th Barrage Balloon Battalion was
21 unique at Normandy for two reasons. First, it was
22 the only American barrage balloon unit in France
23 and second, it was the first and only segregated unit
24 of African-American Soldiers to land on the beaches
25 during D-Day.

1 (4) The brave men of the 320th Barrage Bal-
2 loon Battalion faced intense enemy fire during the
3 D-Day invasion. Their mission was to raise hydro-
4 gen-filled barrage balloons to protect assaulting in-
5 fantry and armor from being strafed by enemy air-
6 craft. The balloons flew at an altitude of around 200
7 feet to defend soldiers landing on the beaches
8 against strafing attacks by German aircraft.

9 (5) The 320th Barrage Balloon Battalion came
10 up with an ingenious solution to one problem they
11 had during the landing. They refitted RL-31 Signal
12 Corps field cable winches with barrage balloon reels,
13 which weighed only 35 pounds and were mounted in
14 the back of a jeep to deploy and control balloons on
15 D-Day.

16 (6) Despite the severe conditions and many bal-
17 loons being shot down, the battalion successfully de-
18 ployed their balloons which resulted in the downing
19 of a German JU-88 aircraft, significantly contrib-
20 uting to the overall security and success of the inva-
21 sion and the Allied victory.

22 (7) Additionally, at approximately 10:15 A.M.
23 on June 6, 1944, five battalion medics with the
24 320th were the first to land on Omaha Beach, with
25 crews of three-to-four men joining them shortly after

1 U.S. Army Corporal Waverly B. Woodson, Jr., was
2 among them.

3 (8) Corporal Woodson was injured when his
4 Landing Craft, Tank (LCT 856) hit a sea mine and
5 was, then, struck by an artillery shell. Despite his
6 injuries, Woodson continued to perform his duties,
7 conducting an amputation, setting limbs and remov-
8 ing bullets over a 30-hour period. He even revived
9 three men via artificial respiration. His efforts on D-
10 Day are believed to have saved 200 soldiers, and he
11 was recommended for the Medal of Honor by Gen-
12 eral John C.H. Lee, but never received it.

13 (9) The 320th Barrage Balloon Battalion
14 served 110 days in France, providing vital air de-
15 fense during the critical early stages of the invasion.
16 In late July 1944, Battery A of the 320th moved
17 from Omaha Beach to the port city of Cherbourg,
18 while the remaining batteries stayed on Omaha and
19 Utah Beaches until early October, when deterio-
20 rating weather prevented ships from landing.

21 (10) Following their service in the European
22 Theater, the 320th underwent training at Camp
23 Stewart, Georgia, prior to their deployment to the
24 Pacific. On May 6, 1945, the 320th arrived in Oahu,

1 Hawaii, in support of the proposed Allied invasion of
2 Japan which never took place.

3 (11) A commendation by Supreme Allied Com-
4 mander General Dwight D. Eisenhower cited the
5 unit for conducting its mission with courage and de-
6 termination, proving to be an important element of
7 the air defense team. Despite their significant con-
8 tributions, the 320th Barrage Balloon Battalion has
9 not received the recognition it deserves in the annals
10 of World War II history.

11 (12) Henry Parham, the last surviving member
12 of this unit, died in July 2021. His passing marked
13 the end of an era, marking it fitting to honor the
14 memory and service of these brave men.

15 (13) The story of the 320th Barrage Balloon
16 Battalion serves as a powerful reminder of the con-
17 tributions and sacrifices of African-American sol-
18 diers in World War II, whose patriotic commitment
19 and perseverance in the face of adversity during D-
20 Day deserve national recognition and commemora-
21 tion.

22 **SEC. 3. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.**

23 (a) PRESENTATION AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of
24 the House of Representatives and the President pro tem-
25 pore of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements

1 for the presentation, on behalf of Congress, of a single
2 gold medal of appropriate design in honor of the 320th
3 Barrage Balloon Battalion, collectively, in recognition of
4 their extraordinary heroism and bravery during the D-Day
5 invasion, and their significant contributions to the success
6 of the Allied forces during World War II.

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

13 (c) SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.—

14 (1) IN GENERAL.—Following the award of the
15 gold medal in honor of the 320th Barrage Balloon
16 Battalion, the gold medal shall be given to the
17 Smithsonian Institution, where it will be available
18 for display as appropriate and available for research.

19 (2) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of
20 Congress that the Smithsonian Institution should
21 make the gold medal awarded pursuant to this Act
22 available for display elsewhere, particularly at appro-
23 priate locations associated with D-Day, World War
24 II, and African-American servicemembers.

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

2 The Secretary may strike and sell duplicates in
3 bronze of the gold medal struck under section 3, at a price
4 sufficient to cover the cost thereof, including labor, mate-
5 rials, dies, use of machinery, and overhead expenses.

6 **SEC. 5. STATUS OF MEDALS.**

7 (a) NATIONAL MEDAL.—Medals struck pursuant to
8 this Act are national medals for purposes of chapter 51
9 of title 31, United States Code.

10 (b) NUMISMATIC ITEMS.—For purposes of sections
11 5134 and 5136 of title 31, United States Code, all medals
12 struck under this Act shall be considered to be numismatic
13 items.

14 **SEC. 6. AUTHORITY TO USE FUND AMOUNTS; PROCEED OF**
15 **SALE.**

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

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

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