

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 7623

To award a Congressional Gold Medal to the Freedom House Ambulance Service, in recognition of its dedicated service to the Pittsburgh community and contributions to the field of emergency medical services.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 20, 2026

Ms. LEE of Pennsylvania (for herself, Mr. KELLY of Pennsylvania, Mrs. DINGELL, Ms. BROWN, Ms. CRAIG, Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, Ms. DEAN of Pennsylvania, Mr. DELUZIO, Mr. EVANS of Pennsylvania, Mr. FROST, Mr. FITZPATRICK, Ms. GOODLANDER, Ms. HOULAHAN, Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHY, Mr. LYNCH, Ms. NORTON, Mr. PAPPAS, Ms. SCANLON, Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania, and Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ) 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 Freedom House Ambulance Service, in recognition of its dedicated service to the Pittsburgh community and contributions to the field of emergency medical services.

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 “Freedom House Ambulance Service Congressional Gold Medal Act”.

4 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

5 Congress finds the following:

6 (1) Freedom House Ambulance Service was the
7 first emergency medical service in the United States
8 to be staffed by paramedics with medical training
9 beyond basic first aid.

10 (2) In the mid-1960s, before Freedom House
11 was founded, ambulance service in the United States
12 was typically provided by either the police or a local
13 funeral home. These services offered little more than
14 transportation and people were dying unnecessarily
15 from treatable illnesses and injuries due to a stark
16 lack of pre-hospital care.

17 (3) In 1965, Freedom House Enterprises was
18 founded to provide economic stimulation to the people of Pittsburgh, specifically those in the predominantly Black Hill District, where a majority of the
19 residents fell well below the poverty line. The goal of
20 Freedom House Enterprises was to create job training and employment opportunities for area residents
21 and to provide training and employment opportunities for those deemed “unemployable” by the city
22 welfare offices.

1 (4) In 1965, Philip Hallen, President of the
2 Maurice Falk Medical Fund, a former ambulance
3 driver, and Chairman of the OEO Health Com-
4 mittee, envisioned a transformative model for emer-
5 gency medical care that combined social justice with
6 medical innovation. He collaborated with Morton
7 Coleman from the University of Pittsburgh’s Grad-
8 uate School of Social Work, James McCoy, Presi-
9 dent of Freedom House Enterprises, Inc., and Dr.
10 Peter Safar, known as the “Father of CPR”, Med-
11 ical Director of Freedom House Ambulance, Pro-
12 fessor and Chair of Anesthesiology at the University
13 of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, to launch Freedom
14 House Ambulance.

15 (5) The formal training curriculum was devel-
16 oped by Dr. Peter Safar and Gerald Esposito, inte-
17 grating hospital rotations, field training, and clinical
18 instruction. Dr. Nancy Caroline, who was later hired
19 as medical director of Freedom House Ambulance,
20 led the development of the first national paramedic
21 textbook, *Emergency Care in the Streets: A Manual*
22 for Paramedics, and served as an advisor to Presi-
23 dent Gerald Ford on emergency medical systems.
24 Dr. Donald M. Benson was the service’s first med-

1 ical advisor and played a key role in the program's
2 initial success.

3 (6) Robert J. Zepfel served as the dedicated di-
4 rector of Freedom House. Councilman Mitchell J.
5 Brown, an original Freedom House paramedic and
6 former military medic, operations director for Free-
7 dom House, hired and mentored future EMS lead-
8 ers, such as retired Assistant Chief John Moon, rec-
9 ognized as the first non-physician to perform endo-
10 tracheal intubation in the field, who is a preeminent
11 advocate for Freedom House Ambulance and excel-
12 lence in pre-hospital emergency care.

13 (7) Addie Johnson and Pearl Porter were the
14 first women to complete training at Freedom House.
15 Other known living members include Darnela Wil-
16 son, George McCary III, Larry Underwood, David
17 Lindell, Bill Raynovich, William McDoodle, John
18 Franklin, and Ruth Johnson, who continue to serve
19 as custodians of the Freedom House legacy.

20 (8) Despite its proven success, Freedom House
21 Ambulance was defunded in 1975 amid political op-
22 position and racial tension. Nonetheless, its training
23 model, clinical data, and innovations directly influ-
24 enced the National Highway Traffic Safety Adminis-

tration’s EMS standards and the national adoption of advanced life-support ambulance systems.

(9) Freedom House Ambulance operated from Presbyterian-University Hospital, now known as UPMC Presbyterian, serving Pittsburgh’s Hill District and neighboring communities with professional, lifesaving pre-hospital care at a time when no comparable system existed. Freedom House empowered its trainees, many of whom were previously unemployed or underemployed, with professional certification and dignity in service, demonstrating that equitable access to education and opportunity strengthens both individuals and communities.

(10) Freedom House members consistently delivered superior medical outcomes and established the model for the modern paramedic system now recognized across the United States.

(11) The Freedom House Ambulance Service remains a cornerstone of American medical and civil rights history, representing courage, excellence, and the enduring power of community-driven innovation.

SEC. 3. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.

(a) PRESENTATION AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President pro tempore of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements

1 for the presentation, on behalf of the Congress, of a single
2 gold medal of appropriate design in commemoration of
3 Freedom House Ambulance Service, in recognition of its
4 dedicated service to the Pittsburgh community and con-
5 tributions to the field of emergency medical services.

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

12 (c) NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN AMERICAN HIS-
13 TORY AND CULTURE.—

14 (1) IN GENERAL.—Following the award of the
15 gold medal under subsection (a), the gold medal
16 shall be given to the National Museum of African
17 American History and Culture of the Smithsonian
18 Institution, where it shall be available for display as
19 appropriate and made available for research.

20 (2) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of
21 Congress that the National Museum of African
22 American History and Culture should make the gold
23 medal received under paragraph (1) available for
24 display elsewhere, particularly at other appropriate

1 locations associated with the Freedom House Ambu-
2 lance Service.

3 **SEC. 4. DUPLICATE MEDALS.**

4 The Secretary may strike and sell duplicates in
5 bronze of the gold medal struck pursuant to section 3 at
6 a price sufficient to cover the cost thereof, including labor,
7 materials, dies, use of machinery, and overhead expenses.

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

9 (a) NATIONAL MEDALS.—The medal struck pursuant
10 to this Act is a national medal for purposes of chapter
11 51 of title 31, United States Code.

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

16 **SEC. 6. AUTHORITY TO USE FUND AMOUNTS; PROCEEDS OF**
17 **SALE.**

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

23 (b) PROCEEDS OF SALE.—The amounts received
24 from the sale of duplicate bronze medals authorized under

- 1 section 4 shall be deposited into the United States Mint
- 2 Public Enterprise Fund.

