

109TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 2321

AN ACT

To require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint coins
in commemoration of Louis Braille.

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 “Louis Braille Bicenten-
5 nial—Braille Literacy Commemorative Coin Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

2 Congress finds as follows:

3 (1) Louis Braille, who invented the Braille
4 method for reading and writing by the blind that has
5 allowed millions of blind people to be literate partici-
6 pants in their societies, was born in Coupvray, a
7 small village near Paris, on January 4, 1809.

8 (2) Braille lost his sight at the age of 3, after
9 injuring himself with an awl in the shop of his fa-
10 ther Rene, a maker of harnesses and other objects
11 of leather.

12 (3) A youth who was both intelligent and cre-
13 ative, Braille was blessed with dedicated parents, a
14 thoughtful local priest, and an energetic local school-
15 teacher.

16 (4) Braille adapted to his situation and at-
17 tended local school with other children of his age, an
18 unheard-of practice for a blind child of the period.

19 (5) At the age of 10, when his schooling other-
20 wise would have stopped, Braille, with the aid of his
21 priest and schoolteacher, was given a scholarship by
22 a local nobleman and went to Paris to attend the
23 Royal Institute for Blind Children, where he became
24 the youngest pupil.

25 (6) At the Institute, most instruction was oral
26 but Braille found there were books for the blind,

1 large, expensive-to-produce books, in which the text
 2 was of large letters embossed upon the page.

3 (7) Soon, Braille had read all 14 books in the
 4 school, but thirsted for more.

5 (8) Charles Barbier de la Serre, a captain in
 6 Napoleon’s army, had invented “night writing”, a
 7 method for communicating on the battlefield amidst
 8 the thick smoke of combat, or at night without light-
 9 ing a match (which would aid enemy gunners), that
 10 used dots and dashes that were felt and interpreted
 11 with the fingers. He later adapted the method for
 12 use by the blind, calling it “Sonography”, because it
 13 represented words by sounds, rather than spelling.

14 (9) Braille adopted the Sonography method in-
 15 stantly, but soon recognized that the basis in sound
 16 and the large number of dots, as many as 12, used
 17 to represent words was too cumbersome.

18 (10) By the age of 15, and using a blunt awl,
 19 the same sort of tool that had blinded him, Braille
 20 had developed what is essentially modern Braille, a
 21 code that uses no more than 6 dots in a “cell” of
 22 2 columns of 3 dots each to represent each letter,
 23 and contains a system of punctuation and of “con-
 24 tractions” to speed writing and reading.

1 (11) In contrast to the bulky books consisting
 2 of large embossed letters, Braille books can contain
 3 as many as 1,000 characters or contractions on a
 4 standard 11-by-12-inch page of heavy paper, and to
 5 this day, Braille can be punched with an awl-like
 6 “stylus” into paper held in a metal “slate” that is
 7 very similar to the ones that Louis Braille adapted
 8 from Barbier’s original “night writing” devices.

9 (12) Also a talented organist who supported
 10 himself by giving concerts, Braille went on to de-
 11 velop the Braille representation of music, and in
 12 1829, published the first-ever Braille book, a manual
 13 about how to read and write music.

14 (13) 8 years later, in 1837, Braille followed
 15 that publication with another book detailing a sys-
 16 tem of representation of mathematics.

17 (14) Braille’s talents were quickly recognized,
 18 and at age 17, he was made the first blind appren-
 19 tice teacher at the school, where he taught algebra,
 20 grammar, music, and geography.

21 (15) He and 2 blind classmates, his friends who
 22 probably were the first people to learn to read and
 23 write Braille, later became the first 3 blind full pro-
 24 fessors at the school.

1 (16) However, despite the fact that many blind
 2 people enthusiastically adopted the system of writing
 3 and reading, there was great skepticism among
 4 sighted people about the real usefulness of Braille’s
 5 code, and even at the Royal Institute, it was not
 6 taught until after his death on January 6, 1852.

7 (17) Braille did not start to spread widely until
 8 1868 when a group of British men, later to become
 9 known as the Royal National Institute for the Blind,
 10 began publicizing and teaching the system.

11 (18) Braille did not become the official and sole
 12 method of reading and writing for blind United
 13 States citizens until the 20th Century.

14 (19) Helen Keller, a Braille reader of another
 15 generation, said: “Braille has been a most precious
 16 aid to me in many ways. It made my going to college
 17 possible—it was the only method by which I could
 18 take notes on lectures. All my examination papers
 19 were copied for me in this system. I use Braille as
 20 a spider uses its web—to catch thoughts that flit
 21 across my mind for speeches, messages, and manu-
 22 scripts.”.

23 (20) While rapid technological advances in the
 24 20th Century have greatly aided the blind in many
 25 ways by speeding access to information, each ad-

1 vance has seen a commensurate drop in the teaching
 2 of Braille, to the point that only about 10 percent
 3 of blind students today are taught the system.

4 (21) However, for the blind not to know Braille
 5 is in itself a handicap, because literacy is the ability
 6 to read and the ability to write and the ability to do
 7 the 2 interactively.

8 (22) The National Federation of the Blind, the
 9 Nation's oldest membership organization consisting
 10 of blind members, has been a champion of the
 11 Braille code, of Braille literacy for all blind people,
 12 and of the memory of Louis Braille, and continues
 13 its Braille literacy efforts today through its divisions
 14 emphasizing Braille literacy, education of blind chil-
 15 dren, and employment of the blind.

16 (23) Braille literacy aids the blind in taking re-
 17 sponsible and self-sufficient roles in society, such as
 18 employment. While 70 percent of the blind are un-
 19 employed, 85 percent of the employed blind are
 20 Braille-literate.

21 **SEC. 3. COIN SPECIFICATIONS.**

22 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of the Treasury
 23 (hereafter in this Act referred to as the “Secretary”) shall
 24 mint and issue not more than 400,000 \$1 coins bearing
 25 the designs specified in section 4(a), each of which shall—

- 1 (1) weigh 26.73 grams;
- 2 (2) have a diameter of 1.500 inches; and
- 3 (3) contain 90 percent silver and 10 percent
- 4 copper.

5 (b) **LEGAL TENDER.**—The coins minted under this
 6 Act shall be legal tender, as provided in section 5103 of
 7 title 31, United States Code.

8 (c) **NUMISMATIC ITEMS.**—For purposes of section
 9 5134 of title 31, United States Code, all coins minted
 10 under this Act shall be considered to be numismatic items.

11 **SEC. 4. DESIGN OF COINS.**

12 (a) **DESIGN REQUIREMENTS.**—

13 (1) **IN GENERAL.**—The design of the coins
 14 minted under this Act shall be emblematic of the life
 15 and legacy of Louis Braille.

16 (2) **OBVERSE.**—The design on the obverse shall
 17 bear a representation of the image of Louis Braille.

18 (3) **REVERSE.**—The design on the reverse shall
 19 emphasize Braille literacy, and shall specifically in-
 20 clude the word for Braille in Braille code (the
 21 Braille capital sign and the letters Brl) represented
 22 in a way that complies with section 3 of specification
 23 800 of the National Library Service for the Blind
 24 and Physically Handicapped of the Library of Con-

1 gress specifications for Braille, and is tactilely indis-
 2 cernible from printed or written Braille.

3 (4) DESIGNATION AND INSCRIPTIONS.—On
 4 each coin minted under this Act, there shall be—

5 (A) a designation of the value of the coin;

6 (B) an inscription of the year “2009”; and

7 (C) inscriptions of the words “Liberty”,
 8 “In God We Trust”, “United States of Amer-
 9 ica”, and “E Pluribus Unum”.

10 (b) SELECTION.—The design for the coins minted
 11 under this Act shall be—

12 (1) selected by the Secretary, after consultation
 13 with the Commission of Fine Arts and the National
 14 Federation of the Blind; and

15 (2) reviewed by the Citizens Coinage Advisory
 16 Committee.

17 **SEC. 5. ISSUANCE OF COINS.**

18 (a) QUALITY OF COINS.—Coins minted under this
 19 Act shall be issued in uncirculated and proof qualities.

20 (b) MINT FACILITY.—Only 1 facility of the United
 21 States Mint may be used to strike any particular quality
 22 of the coins minted under this Act.

23 (c) PERIOD FOR ISSUANCE.—The Secretary may
 24 issue coins minted under this Act only during the 1-year
 25 period beginning on January 1, 2009.

1 **SEC. 6. SALE OF COINS.**

2 (a) SALE PRICE.—The coins issued under this Act
3 shall be sold by the Secretary at a price equal to the sum
4 of—

5 (1) the face value of the coins;

6 (2) the surcharge provided in section 7(a) with
7 respect to such coins; and

8 (3) the cost of designing and issuing the coins
9 (including labor, materials, dies, use of machinery,
10 overhead expenses, marketing, and shipping).

11 (b) BULK SALES.—The Secretary shall make bulk
12 sales of the coins issued under this Act at a reasonable
13 discount.

14 (c) PREPAID ORDERS.—

15 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall accept
16 prepaid orders for the coins minted under this Act
17 before the issuance of such coins.

18 (2) DISCOUNT.—Sale prices with respect to pre-
19 paid orders under paragraph (1) shall be at a rea-
20 sonable discount.

21 **SEC. 7. SURCHARGES.**

22 (a) SURCHARGE REQUIRED.—All sales of coins under
23 this Act shall include a surcharge of \$10 per coin.

24 (b) DISTRIBUTION.—Subject to section 5134(f) of
25 title 31, United States Code, all surcharges which are re-
26 ceived by the Secretary from the sale of coins issued under

1 this Act shall be promptly paid by the Secretary to the
2 National Federation of the Blind, to further its programs
3 to promote Braille literacy.

4 (c) AUDITS.—The National Federation of the Blind
5 shall be subject to the audit requirements of section
6 5134(f)(2) of title 31, United States Code, with regard
7 to the amounts received by the National Federation of the
8 Blind under subsection (b).

Passed the Senate June 29, 2006.

Attest:

Secretary.

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coins in commemoration of Louis Braille.