

113TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 4972

To award posthumously a Congressional Gold Medal to Althea Gibson, in recognition of her groundbreaking achievements in athletics and her commitment to ending racial discrimination and prejudice within the world of athletics.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 25, 2014

Mr. PAYNE introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Financial Services

A BILL

To award posthumously a Congressional Gold Medal to Althea Gibson, in recognition of her groundbreaking achievements in athletics and her commitment to ending racial discrimination and prejudice within the world of athletics.

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 “Althea Gibson Excel-
5 lence Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 The Congress finds the following:

1 (1) Althea Gibson was born August 25, 1927,
2 in Silver, South Carolina.

3 (2) Althea Gibson lived with her family in Har-
4 lem during the 1930s and 1940s. She was first in-
5 troduced to tennis on the Harlem River Tennis
6 Courts. She went on to dominate the all-Black
7 American Tennis Association tournaments through-
8 out the early 1940s, when racism and segregation
9 prevented her from participating in tournaments
10 sponsored by the United States Lawn Tennis Asso-
11 ciation (USLTA).

12 (3) Althea Gibson graduated from Florida A &
13 M University in 1953, and was an athletic instructor
14 at the Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Mis-
15 souri.

16 (4) Despite her extraordinary athletic prowess,
17 Althea was repeatedly denied entry into the world's
18 top tennis tournaments based on the color of her
19 skin. Alice Marble, a four-time U.S. Open champion,
20 wrote a historic editorial published in the July 1950
21 American Lawn Tennis magazine, condemning the
22 sport of tennis for excluding players of Althea Gib-
23 son's caliber.

24 (5) Althea excelled in the Eastern Grass Court
25 Championships at the Orange Lawn Tennis Club in

1 South Orange, New Jersey. Her outstanding grass
2 play caused the USLTA to reevaluate its policy pro-
3 viding Althea a bid to Forest Hills.

4 (6) Althea was the first African-American to
5 win championships at famous tournaments, such as
6 the French Open, the United States Open, the Aus-
7 tralian Doubles, and Wimbledon in the 1950s.

8 (7) Althea broke the color barrier to become the
9 first African-American player, either male or female,
10 to be allowed to enter the Forest Hills, New York,
11 Championship in 1950.

12 (8) Althea Gibson's tennis career flourished,
13 even in the face of discrimination. She was the first
14 African-American invited to Wimbledon in 1951,
15 eventually winning both the women's singles and
16 doubles in 1957 and 1958.

17 (9) She would go on to become the first Afri-
18 can-American woman to win the championship at
19 the French Open in 1956.

20 (10) During her career, she won 56 doubles and
21 singles titles before gaining national and inter-
22 national acclaim for her athletic feats in professional
23 tennis leagues. In the late 1950s, Gibson won eleven
24 major titles including three straight doubles at the

1 French Open in 1956, 1957, and 1958 and the U.S.
2 Open in 1957 and 1958.

3 (11) Althea was the first African-American to
4 be named as the Female Athlete of the Year by the
5 Associated Press in 1957. She was given that honor
6 again the following year. When she won her second
7 U.S. Championship, she went professional at the age
8 of 31.

9 (12) As further evidence to Althea's athletic
10 gift, after finishing her amateur tennis career, she
11 became a professional golfer in 1959. She was also
12 the first African-American woman to hold a mem-
13 bership in the Ladies Professional Golf Association
14 (LPGA).

15 (13) After retiring from golf, Althea Gibson
16 shifted her focus to public service. In 1975, Althea
17 Gibson was named the New Jersey Commissioner of
18 Athletics. She held this position and also served on
19 both the State's Athletics Control Board and the
20 Governor's Council on Physical Fitness.

21 (14) Althea Gibson was inducted into the pres-
22 tigious International Tennis Hall of Fame in 1971
23 and to the International Women's Sports Hall of
24 Fame in 1980.

1 (15) In 1991, the National Collegiate Athletic
2 Association (NCAA) honored Althea Gibson with the
3 Theodore Roosevelt Award, the highest honor the or-
4 ganization may confer on an individual. She was the
5 first woman ever to receive this distinguished honor.

6 (16) Althea passed away in East Orange, NJ,
7 on September 28, 2003.

8 (17) Althea Gibson was a trailblazer whose ex-
9 periences and successes paved the way for other
10 great African-American tennis players like Arthur
11 Ashe.

12 (18) The legacy of Althea Gibson continues to
13 serve as an inspiration and a shining example for
14 the Nation's youth.

15 (19) Joining the ranks of other distinguished
16 Congressional Gold Medal recipients would be a fit-
17 ting accolade to the achievements of Althea Gibson.

18 **SEC. 3. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.**

19 (a) PRESENTATION AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of
20 the House of Representatives and the President pro tem-
21 pore of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements
22 for the posthumous presentation, on behalf of the Con-
23 gress, of a gold medal of appropriate design in commemo-
24 ration of Althea Gibson, in recognition of her
25 groundbreaking achievements in athletics and her commit-

1 ment to ending racial discrimination and prejudice within
2 the world of athletics.

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

9 **SEC. 4. DUPLICATE MEDALS.**

10 The Secretary may strike and sell duplicates in
11 bronze of the gold medal struck pursuant to section 3
12 under such regulations as the Secretary may prescribe, at
13 a price sufficient to cover the cost thereof, including labor,
14 materials, dies, use of machinery, and overhead expenses,
15 and the cost of the gold medal.

16 **SEC. 5. STATUS OF MEDALS.**

17 (a) NATIONAL MEDALS.—The medals struck pursu-
18 ant to this Act are national medals for purposes of chapter
19 51 of title 31, United States Code.

20 (b) NUMISMATIC ITEMS.—For purposes of section
21 5134 of title 31, United States Code, all medals struck
22 under this Act shall be considered to be numismatic items.

1 **SEC. 6. AUTHORITY TO USE FUND AMOUNTS; PROCEEDS OF**
2 **SALE.**

3 (a) **AUTHORITY TO USE FUND AMOUNTS.**—There is
4 authorized to be charged against the United States Mint
5 Public Enterprise Fund, such amounts as may be nec-
6 essary to pay for the costs of the medals struck pursuant
7 to this Act.

8 (b) **PROCEEDS OF SALE.**—Amounts received from the
9 sale of duplicate bronze medals authorized under section
10 4 shall be deposited into the United States Mint Public
11 Enterprise Fund.

